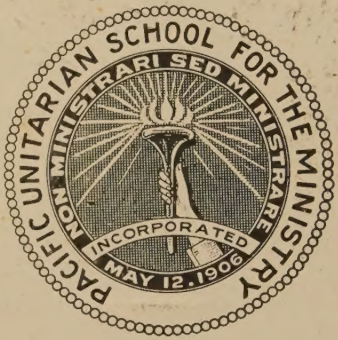
HAND-BOOK OF RATIONAL PIETY

Henry W. Crosskey



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A HAND-BOOK

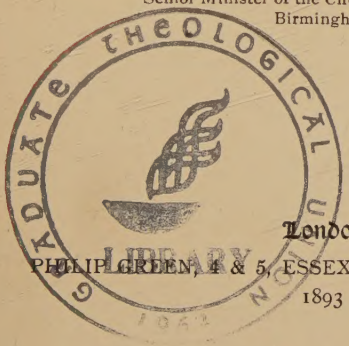
OF

RATIONAL PIETY

BY

HENRY W. CROSSKEY, LL.D., F.G.S.

Senior Minister of the Church of the Messiah
Birmingham



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PRELIMINARY NOTE

THIS Hand-Book consists of extracts from printed and MS. discourses delivered during the ordinary course of a lengthened ministry. It has been prepared at the request of a valued friend who has found the passages selected helpful, and is published in the hope that it may prove of some slight service in showing—especially to those who have abandoned the ancient moorings of Faith and are drifting sadly upon a troubled sea of doubt—how the spirit of a cheerful, trustful, and ennobling piety may be cherished; and yet every claim of the intellect to investigate critical, historical, and metaphysical questions be unreservedly granted.

Sentences and paragraphs indicating the directions in which (in the opinion of the writer) the solution of some of the great problems of life and death may hopefully be sought; illustrative metaphors; confessions of personal feelings and experiences;

short statements of guiding principles for the formation of character—such as those which form the contents of this Hand-Book—will perchance serve to arouse serious thought and give practical guidance during a few of those spare minutes in which very often the tone and temper of the life of the whole passing day, are determined.

George Herbert writes,

> A verse may find him, who a sermon flies,
> And turn delight into a Sacrifice.

It is possible that brief passages from sermons, although lacking the charm of 'verse,' may yet not be quite so unheeded as long sermons themselves often are.

H. W. CROSSKEY.

Birmingham, June, 1893.

RATIONAL PIETY

IN THE SEARCH FOR RELIGIOUS TRUTH:

(1) Do not be content with vagueness of thought.

(2) Keep the head cool and the heart calm.

(3) Be independent.

(4) Do not imagine involuntary errors to be crimes.

(5) Pay no heed to the popularity or unpopularity of any opinion.

(6) Do not be afraid of being a heretic.

(7) Render the Bible its due, but do not think it essential to Religion to accept any alleged fact or doctrine simply because a 'text' can be quoted on its behalf.

Vagueness of thought upon religious subjects is no virtue.

For the simple reason that we have been created rational beings, we ought to learn to think clearly upon all subjects and to speak as clearly as we think. We are bound to know the truth. Why? There is no answer except that we are compelled to search for it by an inward necessity of our being. To watch the stars in their courses will bring no grist to the mill, yet we cannot endure to be ignorant of the path of a shower of meteors. We cannot content ourselves with tilling our fields and gathering in their crops; we must examine the beds of primeval seas, and map the places of vanished continents. It is not enough to be familiar with the nature and habits of the creatures who inhabit the world with us; we must disentomb the remains of a myriad extinct races and our minds refuse to be comforted so long as we find a bone or a shell we cannot classify and name. The development of the tiniest gem the microscope can detect, raises problems we cannot permit to remain unsolved. The states and kingdoms to which we belong are not large enough for our ambition; we must explore the caves in which our

ancestors cracked the bones of the hyena for their marrow.

None toil for money as men will slave to gain a knowledge of phenomena and circumstances of which they make no *use* whatever. They will give up all chance of getting on in the world; they will run the risk of fever in pestilential swamps; they will dare the arctic winter; they will refuse to leave a microscope day or night; they will make a laboratory their home and value it beyond a palace; they will weigh and measure, dig and bore, ceaselessly, to verify some fact or establish some law in which they neither have nor can have any conceivable concern beyond its simple truth.

It cannot be less important to be careful, accurate, laborious, earnest and self-sacrificing in our search for knowledge concerning the nature of that awful Power pervading and sustaining all things and our personal relationships to that Power, than it is to exercise those qualities for the sake of understanding the physical phenomena by which we are surrounded. The boundless activity of man's mind is his Creator's command that he should be a Truth-seeker.

By the very vastness of the mysteries of life and death, by which we are beset 'behind and before,' we are commanded as by the voice of God himself to keep our heads cool and our hearts calm.

When a novice in Alpine climbing, a skilled mountaineer accepted me as a companion in the ascent of a lofty pinnacle, on two conditions—in the first place, that I should keep my head; and, in the second, that I should trust him. Looking upwards to the lofty heights of Eternity towards which we are daily struggling, these two conditions are equally essential—we must keep our heads, and have faith that we *can* do whatever our Creator requires of us, or we shall risk a dangerous fall. Feverish excitement about eternity may affect us like dizziness in crossing a precipice, and prevent us from planting a firm foot on the right spot. Some religious people seem to be in this condition. They see arising around them the fearful precipices of Eternity; they are bewildered; their minds tremble; their hearts almost cease to beat; and they know not where to rest their feet in safety. Whenever, therefore, I am asked, 'Are you properly prepared for eternity?' and am warned

of the awful import of the question, I pause for a moment, gather my wits together, and steady my head. Keeping my calmness, I soon see that I can meet the question by another, the answer to which is not far to seek—how can I prepare myself for old age? As the years pass, if God keeps us upon earth, old age will come with inevitable step. The strength of the limbs will pass; a little toil will fatigue; to younger men will be left those duties which now fill the busy hours. How shall we best fit ourselves for these coming days of tottering limbs and easily wearied senses? In an extremely simple way. We best prepare for old age by doing an honest day's work while we can. Sensible men do not waste their energies in complaining that they are going to be old, and that in a few years they will be unable to work. They make the wisest use they can of the day that yet shines upon their strength. We can prepare ourselves for eternity in precisely the same way—by doing our day's work while it is day. Sufficient for eternity will be the demands of eternity. Meanwhile, we are alive in this world, and have our places to fill, and our duties to discharge.

Spiritual independence is worth the price it often costs.

A woman of genius who knew what it was to have grave and bitter sorrows brought upon those she loved by defiances of the world's opinions, had a certain school recommended to her for her son, on the ground that there he would learn to cherish independence of thought. 'Oh, my God!' was her reply, 'let him be taught to think as other people do.' Doubtless all brave thinkers who dare to be true to themselves must be prepared to pay a price—often a great price—for their freedom. Yet it is even more certain that the proudest earthly success can give no blessedness equal to that possessed by the man who will receive nothing at the world's hands that he cannot take with the approval of his conscience—and who knows clearly what is the right thing to do—does it, and thanks God when it is done.

Wrong opinions conscientiously formed are not crimes.

We cannot help our opinions. Assuredly we may act wrongfully in not taking pains to collect evidence;

but the evidence being gathered together, the final act of judgment itself in no way depends upon the will. The members of a jury, should they be kindly-hearted men, would be rejoiced to be able to acquit every prisoner. When they return a verdict of guilty, it is because on the evidence presented they cannot prevent themselves from coming to that decision. We can no more control our theological decisions than upright jurymen can give a verdict according to their fancies, tastes, or pleasures. A God who should condemn his children for involuntary acts of judgment, would be too unjust a being for the heart to love or for the soul to adore. It directly follows that a man may be a heathen or a Jew or a Christian; a Confucian, a Buddhist, a Mahometan or what not; he may be a Catholic or a Protestant —of any sect; he may be a sceptic and a doubter; nay he may more than question, he may declare that he sees no reason for believing in any religion at all,—and yet, if he be an honest man and strive to do his duty towards his fellow-creatures, he may be an accepted saint of God. I no more believe that a just God will punish an honest man for an erroneous faith, or for the lack of any faith at all,

than I believe that he will condemn me to perdition because in my unconscious ignorance when a flower is presented to me, I assign it to a wrong species; or when I have to examine a rock, I place it in a formation to which it does not belong. It is true that certain tendencies of character may influence our intellectual judgments, and that if these tendencies are evil ones, we are morally responsible for them. It is equally true, however, that precisely the same wrongful passions may dwell within the hearts of men who hold entirely antagonistic doctrines; and it is *not* true that all good men accept one and the same set of 'articles' of faith.

As a matter of fact, all sinners are not heretics, neither are all heretics sinners; all orthodox believers are not saints of God, neither are all saints of God orthodox believers.

The popularity or unpopularity of a religion is no test of its truth.

No great cause advances without fluctuations of fortune. Despondency is in reality the child of egotism. It shows that we are thinking too much

of our own success and our own glory, and too little of the unconquerable forces that are on the side of righteousness and truth. To despair of a great cause is to think more of ourselves than of our God.

The more scornfully any religious principle is rejected by the majority of men as a 'heresy,' the more calmly and patiently it should be examined.

The unpopularity of a cause is a divine challenge for its careful study. The stone 'rejected by the builders' is the very stone to be considerately and conscientiously examined, to see if it may not be fitted 'to become the head of the corner.' Discarded principles of thought and conduct make majestic demands of their own upon the hearts and souls of men—in the great might of the excessive wrong that may perchance have been done unto them. Not once or twice only, to find the world's heroes—its prisons have had to be searched; not once or twice only has truth been found in those intellectual dungeons, heavily barred with iron prejudices into which scorned heresies have been pitilessly thrust.

Our religion does not depend upon our opinions respecting the authority of the Bible.

A man who believes the whole Bible from the first verse in Genesis to the last verse in the Book of Revelation to be without error is not necessarily in the least degree more religious than the man who finds in its pages the record of many superstitions; and for two reasons—(1) Questions respecting the composition and authority of the various books contained in the Bible require for their right and full answering accurate scholarships together with a large knowledge of history and a skilful application of the methods of historical research—and these requirements, valuable and honourable as they are, are *not* those by which the thoughts, feelings and deeds that are righteous and loving can be discriminated from those which are unrighteous and cruel. (2) Men may arrive at exactly opposite conclusions respecting the authority of the Bible and yet be equally desirous of obeying the laws of God, equally penitent for their transgressions, and equally confident that the Lord is their shepherd, who will make them lie down in green pastures and lead them beside the still waters.

The rejection of the doctrine of the Infallibility of the Bible is its enthronement as a Book of Life.

I can hardly express the fulness of my thankfulness that my religion justifies the application of rational methods to the study of the Bible. The book of Genesis touches me infinitely more deeply with its childlike faith—its pastoral beauty—its patriarchal simplicity—because I do not attempt to make Moses speak the language of Lyell and Darwin; and do not judge Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob by the standard of modern civilization.

The Psalms have infinitely greater power to make me lie down in green pastures and to lead me beside the still waters—than they could have, did I feel bound to accept the wild curses uttered by David against his enemies, as the very 'word of God' himself.

The prophets become mightier guides when I study them as men of Israel and Judah striving to direct the politics of their day by the eternal laws of righteousness, than they could possibly be to me, were I to regard them as mere predictors of the fate of a few cities and the results of a few wars.

The Gospels and Epistles are the richer in spiritual influence over my soul because I believe that it is more certain that the 'blessed among men are the merciful, the peacemakers, and the pure in heart, than it is that Christ turned water into wine; and that the metaphysics of Paul do not stand so far above criticism as do those sublime words, 'though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge; and though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.'

THERE ARE TWO GREAT TESTS OF THE TRUTH OF A RELIGION:

(1) Its doctrines and commands must be approved by the intellect as rational; acknowledged by the conscience as right; and rejoiced in by the heart as loving.

(2) It must make us both nobler and happier men.

The first condition for obtaining any knowledge of our God is to be true to the nature He has given us.

To gain religious truth every man, because he is a child of God, is bound to use and trust the natural faculties and feelings he possesses. It is the right of the human intellect to demand that religion should be reasonable; it is the right of the human heart to demand that it should be loving; it is the right of the human conscience to demand that it should be morally pure. No doctrine that is not reasonable, loving, and morally pure alike in its substance and influence can be part of an 'undefiled' religion. Were it otherwise, to be religious would be to be false to the highest standard of the manhood to which our Creator himself has called us by making us *men*.

A man who cultivates his rational powers and uses them faithfully—although he may form mistaken conclusions, does all that his Maker can expect from him with respect to his creed, in as much as he does his best with the faculties bestowed upon him. It would be utterly unjust in a supreme God to enable us to think—and then *because we think* to condemn

us. We have affections which bind us together by the sweetest and tenderest ties and render us capable of sacrificing all earthly treasures for love's dear sake—when any creed therefore attributes cruelty to the Creator of the heart of man it cannot be received as religious truth. By our consciences we mark the distinction between good and evil. It is true that what one man esteems good, another may pronounce evil, just as what is a rational conclusion to one man may be a perverse superstition to another. What every one is bound to do is—to obey his own conscience and not to attribute to his God any actions which he would condemn as wicked among men.

A pure and undefiled religion must be a religion which makes us purer and more loving, more cheerful and more hopeful.

Unless a Religion *can* convert men from iniquity to righteousness; unless it *can* compel the sensual and the base to feel that the judgment of God is upon them, while His tender mercy is ever seeking to save them that are lost; unless it *can* make the selfish, self-sacrificing—the cowardly, brave—the

worldly, unworldly—the envious and jealous, generous —and fill the weary and heavy-laden with unutterable joy in the heavenly Love,—it is not a religion worth having. It may excite our feelings—it may interest us in argumentative controversies, but having no power over our lives, it will be only like a toy we play with and have no serious meaning for our souls.

WE MAY HAVE A RELIGION AND BE RELIGIOUS:

(1) Without attempting to give any accurate definition of the nature of an Infinite God.

(2) Without deeming it necessary to find a complete explanation of the existence of pain and evil.

(3) Without having any of those 'visions and revelations,' or sharing those ecstasies of piety which are described by many holy men as coming within the range of their experience.

To have sufficient knowledge of God to worship Him, and to understand what He now requires of us, it is not necessary that we should be able to define accurately the mysteries of his Eternal Being.

No Being would be infinite whose nature could be adequately described or comprehended by finite man. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so *must* the ways of the Lord of all be higher than our ways, and His thoughts than our thoughts. Speculations upon subjects which baffle human reason are not, however, the 'be all and the end all' of religion. The high themes which a rational religion bids us dwell upon are the dispositions, the hopes, the tastes, the desires, the affections, the aspirations upon which character depends, and in which abide the fullest blessedness of life. How to live; what to admire and adore, and what to scorn and despise; what to honour, and what to condemn as dishonourable; what to rejoice in as 'beautiful exceedingly,' and what to hold in aversion; what to love with all our hearts, and what to detest with equal heartiness—*these* are the central problems of what is to me the highest religious faith, because they are the problems most nearly concerned with the

will of our maker as it is practically revealed to us in the human nature we possess and the world in which we are placed.

Although no definition of the Everlasting God is possible, yet it is as certain as the coming of death itself that we are not our own masters—that by a power we cannot control, laws have been established which we cannot disobey without punishment, or obey without blessedness—and that these laws can be discovered if we search for them with intelligence—with reverent regard solely for what is true—and with purity of heart.

What is unknown in nature does not justify belief in the existence of a Chaos, and what is inexplicable in life gives no sufficient ground for questioning the righteousness and love of the Creator.

The faith of a man who cherishes the spirit of a rational piety is equivalent to that of the man of science whose judgment is baffled by a mystery of nature. When the man of science can offer no explanation of some observed facts, he does not exclaim, 'Confusion prevails in the physical world,'

and lose his confidence in the reign of Law. On the contrary, he confesses his ignorance and waits for light. His researches have so uniformly resulted in the establishment of unchanging laws, that he unhesitatingly believes that whatsoever is unintelligible to-day will ultimately be connected with the intelligible phenomena of the universe. When we are oppressed by the pain and evil we find around us, we have no more right to jump to the conclusion either that there is no God, or that if there is a God He is careless of the welfare of His children, than the scientific man has to question the steadfast regularity of the Laws of nature, because he cannot for the moment reconcile them with all his observations.

We have to consider whether there is not abundant evidence to show that in the government of the world Righteousness and Love are so much stronger than the iniquities and hateful passions of men as to justify our faith in a righteous and loving God, although we cannot understand all His ways.

There may be natural piety without ecstatic excitement of the soul.

The extent to which the feelings are capable of excitement by thoughts and appeals touching God and eternity is very commonly taken as the measure of *religiousness* of character. By this 'excitement,' I mean the absorption of every interest, passion, hope, in ecstatic meditations upon the awful Spirit pervading all that is. Some men and women—and holy saints they have been—have achieved this. Upborne upon the wings of strong emotions they have almost left earth far behind them, and passed through the clouds of mortality into the realm of the radiant light surrounding the Everlasting Throne. These ecstatics of piety, however, are largely the result of natural temperament. Religious excitability varies among individuals quite as much as an ear for music—so that if its extremity of fervour represented the highest type of religiousness no one by nature incapable of attaining it could be justly blamed for its lack, any more than those not endowed with an ear for music could be deemed sinful for not being able to play upon the organ. But I dare believe that the purest

and deepest of religious feelings are not those which only a few rapt saints can possess, but are those which may be cherished by ordinary men and women amid the joys and sorrows, the toils and cares of our common human lot.

Whenever we are grateful for whatever blessings the years may bring, we really acknowledge a Giver of good and perfect gifts. Whenever we are patient in our afflictions, we virtually trust ourselves to the care of a Wisdom beyond our own. Whenever we sacrifice ourselves for love's dear sake, we admit the authority of Love, and join our voices to those of the multitude of the heavenly host who sang, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and goodwill among men.' Whenever we discharge any task *as a duty*, we practically admit that we are servants of a Righteous Power whose commands we have no 'right' to resist.

WHEN WE HAVE ACCEPTED A RELIGION AS TRUE:

(1) We should not imagine that our intellectual convictions concerning its truth will suffice to unite us with God and redeem us from evil.

(2) We should be faithful to it.

(3) We should serve it with our most devoted energies, and be willing to sacrifice, if need be, our most precious earthly treasures on its behalf.

(4) We should carefully remember that among the saints of God, the widest conceivable differences in theological opinion prevail.

(5) We should not forget that those whose superstitions, as we think, cause them to reject it, may find in those very superstitions powerful motives for leading noble lives.

(6) We should prize most dearly those elements in it which belong to the Religion of all good men.

The adoption of rational opinions does not necessarily make us religious men.

Suppose that all the people in England agreed in their religious opinions, and even suppose that all those opinions were thoroughly *rational*—do you think, do you imagine, do you dream, that 'the world, the flesh, and the devil,' would lose all their power, and that there would be no 'lust of the flesh and lust of the eye and pride of life?' But suppose that every one in England desired, with all the strength of his mind and all the passion of his heart,

> 'To feel, to think, to do,
> Only the holy right,
> To yield no step in the awful race,
> No blow in the fearful fight;'

suppose that every one in England respected, admired, reverenced, only and solely whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure and lovely in the sight of God; suppose that every one in England strove with the energy and determination of a noble enthusiasm to become Christ-like, not counting himself 'to have apprehended,' but 'forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which

are before,' should we not *then* indeed dwell in a kingdom of heaven upon earth?

Blessings fall upon every man who is faithful to his own religion.

I assuredly teach that Catholic, Calvinist, Unitarian, Pagan, Jew,—yea, that *all* God's children will be redeemed if faithful to their light. The particular creed a man professes, it may therefore be urged, can be of little consequence, and we need not trouble ourselves to support the interests of our own Church with any special sacrifices. There is confusion of thought and feeling in this plea for negligence. I do not teach that a Catholic will receive God's blessings by being *un*faithful to his Catholicism, or a Calvinist by being *un*faithful to his Calvinism, or a Unitarian by being *un*faithful to his Unitarianism, or a Mahomedan by being *un*faithful to his Mahomedanism; or a Jew by being *un*faithful to his Judaism. It matters everything to every man that he should be devotedly faithful to that which is divinest to his own soul. Not only will the power over our hearts of any form of religion we may profess be lessened, but the moral

strength of our characters will be enfeebled, if, having real convictions, we hold them timidly and apologetically and do not treat them as pearls of so great a price that it is well to go and sell all that we have to possess their glory. Thoroughness of devotion to our own highest thoughts will alone sustain the noblest life of our souls.

Nothing mean or paltry or less than our best should be done in the service of our God.

In those great churches of Italy, which lately I have had the privilege of visiting, built by pious men of old for the glory of their God, I noted, as all travellers must note, how they brought their richest treasures to complete and fulfil all loveliness. The material employed is the most precious earth can yield. Marbles of intense and radiant hues are inlaid in the very pavements as in the walls. Pillars of porphyry rise in the aisles. Jasper, chalcedony, serpentine, emerald, lapis-lazuli, alabaster, mother-of-pearl, jewels, gold, are profusely lavished upon the adornment of every square inch of space. To bring light into the temple erected with passionate purpose

to show forth the majesty of the Lord of heaven and earth, every colour hidden in stone is sought; colour of sunset clouds and of the dawn, colour of the blue sky and of the sea, colour of a fair woman's countenance, colour of the eye's mystic depths. All forms of natural loveliness, buds, blossoms, and fruits, vine and fig and acanthus leaves, are wrought in stone upon the arches of windows and doors, the capitals of columns, everywhere that the carvers could find their opportunity. To achieve the perfection of beauty was the end and aim of all concerned in the erection of these marvellous churches. The instruction given to the architect Amolfo di Cambo, who was charged with the erection of the Cathedral at Florence in 1298, was, that he should build 'the loftiest, the most sumptuous edifice that human invention could devise or human labour execute.'

In this spirit it is our duty to work for any cause that we believe in our hearts to be alike the cause of humanity and of God. The ideal we place before us should be the loftiest, imagination, guided by love and reverence, can conceive, and the labours devoted to its realization should exhaust all the possibilities of our strength.

To value religious truth in no way interferes with a hearty belief in the 'communion of the saints.'

Pure and undefiled religion is not the acceptance of any series of dogmas, however true they may chance to be, logically elaborated by the inquiring intellect, but a disposition of the heart—a great trust in the immortal love of a Heavenly Father, a true penitence for our many transgressions, a pressing forward towards a 'high calling,' a solemn consecration of life to divinely unselfish purposes. It does not follow, however, from this great spiritual principle that it is a matter of no consequence at all, whether we profess opinions that are true or opinions that are false. The love of truth can be no unacceptable sacrifice to offer upon the altar of the God of Truth.

While I cherish religion as a divine emotion, and with all my soul believe that holy men of every creed dwell with God and God with them, and form one 'communion of Saints,' yet I esteem it as solemn an obligation to search for truth in matters pertaining to Religion as in any branch of scientific or historic research, and in any transaction of daily life. Our maker has endowed us both with the desire for truth

and with faculties adapted for its pursuit; and to refuse to think is to slight His gifts. Our pride is shown by *not* searching, and not by searching for the Truth.

Strange superstitions may serve as God's instruments for promoting noble changes of character.

I have frequently examined, as carefully as I could, the character of the experience passed through by many Christians who have said that they have once been 'lost sinners'—utterly lost—but, having 'found Jesus,' have been 'washed in the blood of the Lamb,' and brought to the 'mercy seat.' The imagery of their language is often revolting, recalling rather the slaughter-house of the overthrown Temple than the Holy Land trod by the feet of Christ, and fair with the lilies of the fields he loved. Signs of hysteria may be noted. But in many cases, without doubt, a real experience has been described. What has it been? What relief has been found in Christ and his cross? A new love, divinely pure, has been awakened by the self-sacrificing holiness of Christ, and has driven from the heart the coarse mob of passions which had heretofore dwelt within it. The love of

Christ has robbed old sins of their fascinating charms; and the temptations which once so terribly tried the soul's strength are found to be temptations no longer. In the love of Christ, the very desire to do wrong has passed away.

Religious fellowship in a Christian Church should depend upon spiritual sympathy and not upon theological agreement.

I delight to worship in a Church which opens its doors for the entrance of any and every child of God, and the members of which are united together by the harmony of their spiritual sympathies, and not by their adhesion to a common creed, no matter whether that creed consist of thirty-nine or half-a-dozen articles of faith. The members of such a Church believe that true religious fellowship is based upon reverence, love, and aspiration; upon the recognition of one supreme Righteousness; upon the pressing forward towards one majestic ideal of a divine life; upon the deeply-felt need of one Mercy to cover our sins with healing wings; upon the cherishing one spirit of childlike trust in the Heavenly Father of us all.

To understand all that man can understand of the nature of God we must study:

(1) The external Universe.

(2) Our own being.

(3) The lives of all great and good men, together with the life of Christ.

(4) The practical effects of our actions.

(5) The history of our Race.

This great principle that the invisible things of God are to be understood 'from the things that are made,' *i.e.*, from nature and humanity—underlies all the teachings of Jesus Christ.

A rational Religion is based upon the facts concerning the nature of the Creator which are made known to us by His works, and by the method in which we find the world to be actually governed.

To find my God I do not elaborate a philosophy of the infinite, but I listen to the teachings of those who can read the history of creation as it is written upon the rocks, or predict the coming of eclipses, time the wandering courses of the comets and weigh the stars in a balance; or trace the way in which the coming of man was prophesied in every preceding form of life. I do not meditate upon an abstract righteousness, I turn to the doer of a brave deed, to the struggler against earth's iniquities, to the patient bearer of every burden for truth's sake. I do not attempt to define an abstract Omnipotence, I note the strength of the martyr's will and mark how no infliction of cruel sufferings can break the unconquerable firmness of his refusal to utter a false word or to submit to an unjust law.

I do not picture to myself a Being seated upon a throne far away from this troubled earth, in sublime self-content; but I mark the peace which weary

hearts do sometimes find in the bitterness of their sorrows—the quietness which will come to the soul amid the noisy tumults of the crowd—the thrice blessed 'evenness of motion' with which the stream of a holy life may glide to the ocean of Eternity.

I do not address mere words of praise to a glory I cannot comprehend, but I recall the beauty of the holiness which has actually blossomed upon earth. I listen to the Lord's saints as they bear witness to an arm which has never failed and a love which has never forgotten. I retrace my own days, wayward as they have been and see how far beyond all seeking and all deserving, blessings have fallen.

As I study Nature and Humanity and remember the experiences of my own days, instead of ignorantly bowing down before a Righteousness, Omnipotence, Wisdom, Power, and Glory, which in their Infinity escape my comprehension, I draw near to a Heavenly Father in whom all men live and move and have their being.

The life of Christ, when regarded as a natural human life, is a revelation of the nature of God.

To many minds, there are many Christs. There is the mystic Christ—the Christ whose relationship to the substance of Eternal Being the Fathers of the Church have believed they understood, and under threat of eternal woe have demanded assent to their opinions. Personally, I confess that this Christ does not lay his hands upon me. He is surrounded with so many unintelligible mysteries that I cannot approach close to him as to a familiar friend.

There is the official Christ; the Christ who occupies the highest position in the Courts of Heaven, and exercises his influence with the great Father on behalf of the human race. I cannot say that this Christ wins the love of my heart—for I know nothing of the need of any pleading to make my Creator act mercifully and am so conscious of His awful majesty that I believe the destiny of all His children may be left in His own charge. There is the wonder-working Christ; and this Christ has no great power over my soul. To be able to turn water into wine or to walk upon the waves or to blast a fruitless tree does

not seem to me to have any necessary connection with gentleness of heart, righteousness of conduct, and willingness to die upon the cross for truth's high sake.

There is the sectarian Christ—the Christ who is supposed to have taught the dogmas professed by one special sect and to require adhesion to that sect from all his disciples. With this Christ, I have not the slightest sympathy. All men are God's children, and a Christ who narrowed His love could not be His messenger.

But there is also the natural Christ. It is true that acute Biblical critics dwell upon the difficulty of deciding exactly what the historic Christ said and did, but I take the Gospels and find there one I can love. My heart goes out to the natural Christ who sat at meat with publicans and sinners, and kept himself unspotted from the world; who loved the woods and fields; who took little children in his arms and blessed them; who offered the prodigal a welcome home; who was awakened to wrath by the hypocrite, and pardoned the woman who loved much; whose deepest sympathies were with the slave, the prisoner, the outcast, the unfortunate and the

despised among men; who with keen intellect held his own against those who would betray him to death, and with proud courage defended himself at the bar of judgment; who in his hour of uttermost agony spake the words of tenderest mercy; who to the last cheerfully, patiently, courageously toiled to establish the Kingdom of God upon earth and died rather than abandon his task, trusting in his God to fulfil all righteousness.

The Creator of this natural Christ cannot be less righteous and less loving than Christ was; and a God who is as good as Christ is a being before whom I bow down with worshipful awe.

Jesus Christ teaches that the righteousness and love of God are revealed in the righteousness which man may reduce to practice in his daily life and in the love which man's heart can feel.

Jesus Christ teaches the harmony between the human soul and God, and God and the human soul. He appeals to the love of the human heart as being the same in substance as the love of God, and the love of God as being the same as the love of the

human heart, when he asks 'what man is there of you, who if his son shall ask him for a loaf shall give him a stone?' and adds, 'if ye then being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?' The question 'why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?' would be meaningless if it did not imply that the righteousness of God is akin to that very righteousness which constitutes the noblest life of man. When he bids us pray that our debts may be forgiven as 'we also have forgiven our debtors,' he clearly regards the commonplace daily mercy which men ought to show to each other as the kind of mercy we may hope to receive from our God Himself. The great modern philosopher, Mr. J. S. Mill, does but illustrate the principle laid down by Christ when he writes:—'If I call any being good or wise, not meaning the only qualities which the words import, I am speaking insincerely; I am flattering him by epithets which I fancy that he likes to hear, in the hope of winning him over to my objects. Does the Divine goodness agree with what men call goodness, in the essence of the quality, in what constitutes goodness? If it does, it is not illicit

to reason from one to the other ; if it does not, the Divine attribute, whatever else it may be, is not goodness, and ought not to be called by that name.'

According to the Gospel of Christ, love, justice, mercy, cannot have one meaning when applied to man, and another meaning when applied to God.

We must not permit the shadow of any human imperfection to darken our thoughts of God ;—yet because He is our Creator, all the Goodness and Love existing among men must have been derived from Him and cannot be essentially different in kind, although infinitely removed in degree, from His own Goodness and His own Love. The most perfect man is the clearest image of the invisible God on which mortal eyes can gaze. Through the exercise of our powers of thought, we may comprehend the very truth of God. The goodness to be found among men reveals His righteousness. The judgments of God may be interpreted by the methods in which high-minded men deal with victims of mortal passions. His love may be known from those affections which set us together in families, fill the heart with tender pity for the sorrowful, and prevent the innocent from having any peace while those who have sinned remain in their degradation.

'IN THE BEGINNING' MAN DID NOT CREATE, 'THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH'; BUT SINCE MAN CAN TRACE THE METHOD OF CREATION HIS MIND MUST BE AKIN IN NATURE TO THE MIND OF THE CREATOR. IT FOLLOWS:

(1) That every scientific fact must be accepted as an article of religious faith.

(2) That the wonders of the world in which we live are inexhaustible and that it is our religious duty to study their meaning as it is our religious privilege to rejoice in their glory.

(3) That our theological speculations have an inferior authority to that of the observed realities of nature.

(4) That no combination of physical elements can have produced the *mind* by which they are comprehended.

All scientific facts are divine revelations.

Outside of us, in this physical universe, there is a Power not our own, resistless and supreme, in as much as man cannot create an atom of matter or alter any of those successions of phenomena which are termed laws of Nature. Whatever we know concerning Nature is therefore *religious knowledge*—since it is knowledge of the will of that Power.

In all our dealings with the external world—in farming, building, machine-making and what not, we act *religiously* when we do our daily work (as we *must* do to insure success) in accordance with the demands of the laws which prevail among the elements, materials, forces, with which we have to deal—laws we did not establish and cannot repeal. Were religion a mere speculation, we could not rely upon any regularity in the succession of phenomena, for there would be no authority capable of securing it. A law of nature has no existence of its own. It cannot carry itself into effect, any more than an Act of Parliament can. To secure its persistent observance there must be an executive Power. When 'Nature' is spoken of as establishing laws, it becomes but another name for God.

This earth as it is—how much fairer is it, than we have had eyes to see; how much richer is it in blessings than we have had grace to understand!

A tale is told of a Jesuit Father who late in life became an accomplished naturalist, having been moved to commence the study of nature in the following way:—He was very ill; and while meditating on what he believed would prove his death-bed, this thought came into his mind—'I am going, as I humbly hope, to heaven, but how little do I know of the glory of the earth I am about to leave.' His ignorance of earth shocked him as he was about to pass from it for ever. Contrary to his expectation, he recovered; and he then devoted himself to gaining more knowledge of the marvellous works of God, stretched around him in boundless profusion, as the best preparation for enjoying the majesty of the Heaven to come. The good old father was right; and his thought will bear extension to the sphere of active life. Do we our work faithfully on earth, and we need not trouble ourselves as to what may happen in eternity. If in this present year of grace we are serving our fellow-men, and obeying our

Master's will, where our souls may chance to be located in 1983, and what may be our tasks then, are questions we may fairly leave until their own time comes.

A nightingale's song may tell us more of the Creator's wisdom than many a theological controversy.

An old legend runs to the following effect; in May, 1443, a company of priests at the time of the Council went to walk in a wood near Basle; there were prelates and monks robed in vestments of all colours, and they eagerly engaged in discussions upon some of the most intricate doctrines of theology—but suddenly in the midst of their dogmatic arguments, they stopped short and remained rooted to the earth before a linden tree whereon a nightingale sat and exulted and sighed in the softest, tenderest melodies. 'Come away!' cried a shocked monk, 'it is a temptation of the devil.' A temptation of the devil—to be charmed from theological disputations by a nightingale's song! In the religion I humbly cherish, the nightingale's song tells me more of my Maker than do the subtilties of many controversial theologians.

The study of Nature is needed for the perfecting of our Religion.

The study of the external universe cannot but give real knowledge of the Power creating and sustaining it. If the day of faith is again to dawn—again, as of old, when the Sun breaks through the golden portals of the mystic sky it must awaken within our souls worshipful thoughts. Again, as of old, must the unfailing sequence of the changeful seasons, the growth of the seed and the ripening of the harvest, the welling of fountains, and the rolling of seas, the coming and going of the stars in their courses, be recognised as witnesses of the Life beyond all life. We must come back to Nature—from whose bosom our forefathers drew the sweet sustenance of their infant hopes touching things eternal, and humbly ask whether her gracious hand will not again lead her children to the solemn temple hidden in the deep words of her benignant peace, and whether her voice will not again whisper into listening ears the secrets of the Kingdom of God. The glory of heaven and earth may yet avail to win from the rebellious heart the cry of Job, when the Lord had answered him out of the

whirlwind, 'now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I repent in dust and ashes.' Souls outwearied with speculative debates may yet yield to the charms of the lilies of the field. Doubts which defy logic may yet vanish before simple confidence in the unbroken order preserved throughout Creation. A knowledge of the range and limits of scientific methods of research will make the spiritual world more real to us, by making us understand that no measurable physical force can explain the endurance of martyrs, that no chemical combination is an equivalent of the action of the will and that no variations among species of animals occupying a lower plane of being, and acting for and by themselves, could have brought into existence the soul of man, dowered as it is with a sense of duty, and a capacity for boundless love.

In a busy world, developing to the utmost the mechanical agencies by which its comforts and luxuries may be increased, science may quicken that sense of the Infinite, that solemn awe, that conviction of the unutterable majesty of all created things, which will constitute the very soil in which a rational religious faith can take root and grow.

THE FOLLOWING ETHICAL FACTS SUPPORT AND EMPHASISE THE CLAIMS OF A RATIONAL PIETY:

(1) Man has a moral nature.

(2) The consequences of human actions have not been decided upon *by* man but *for* man.

(3) Moral laws have been established for the government of the world which, (*a*) never fail, and (*b*) have been the same from the beginning until now.

(4) The human race has progressed and is progressing from barbarism to civilization.

From these facts it follows that a man who does his duty practically acknowledges the authority of a righteous God and is a religious man.

Our own moral nature teaches us that our Creator is Righteous.

We did not create our own moral nature. The faculty we possess of discerning a distinction between right and wrong, is a constituent element of our being. Whatever special actions our education and surrounding social circumstances may induce us to discriminate as 'right' or 'wrong,' we cannot help making that distinction and arranging all actions '*in an order of worth*.' Our Maker therefore must care for actions that are righteous as distinguished from those that are iniquitous; or this faculty of discrimination could never have been bestowed upon us. Were there no righteous Judge, conscience could never have had an *authoritative* voice; we should have been able to do anything that impulse, taste, or desire might prompt without remorse. Mercy and cruelty, purity and impurity, justice and injustice, love and hatred, would have been resolved into mere matters of personal preference.

The righteousness of God is revealed by the fact that the good tree brings forth good fruit, the evil tree evil fruit.

As man did not create his own conscience so also he does not decide for himself what actions shall bring forth the fruit of personal blessedness and social harmony. Suppose any man to say 'I will be my own God—I have resolved that in my case the beatitudes of Christ shall be reversed. With me, it shall be, Blessed are the proud; blessed are they who hunger and thirst after licentious self-indulgence; blessed are the unmerciful and cruel; blessed are the impure of heart; blessed are the quarrelsome, the jealous and the envious.' Whatever his strength of will might be, such a man would find his life darkened by a bitter curse and would no more be able to escape from the miserable consequences of his actions than to hold back a cataract with his outstretched hands. Suppose any government to proclaim, 'In this Kingdom the ten commandments may be dispensed with and no punishment shall attend their violation. You may kill; you may commit adultery; you may steal; you may bear false witness;

you may covet everything that is your neighbour's'—what would be the result? General wretchedness, confusion, bloodshed. The experiment has to a very considerable extent been tried. Again and again have attempts been made to prop up the power of mighty Empires by hateful deeds of cruelty and by placing no effective check on the proud lusts of the flesh; and again and again have those empires fallen like houses shattered by an earthquake. How and why has this been? There is no answer but one; it is the will of the Power behind all powers that there shall be no peace with iniquity and man has been so constituted by his Maker that he must have freedom and justice cost what they may. Were there no righteous God, it would be possible to gather good fruit from evil trees, and evil fruit from good trees.

We cannot escape from the moral laws of our Creator. They are as fixed and unchanging as the laws by which the physical universe is governed.

The unfailing constancy of natural laws—with the resulting harmony of the worlds, is more wonderful than the most wonderful of miracles

ever recorded. It is more than amazing to note that an established law never fails. North and south and east and west; at the bottom of the ocean; in the depths of the sky; in the unfrequented desert; in the recesses of pathless woods; among weeds and flowers; in the pool of water which is as a universe to myriads of unseen creatures—no spot can be found in which definitely determined laws lose their hold or are restricted in their persistency. More wondrous still, and as unfailing in their action, are the moral laws under which we live. All appetites, desires, tempers, and inclinations, are subject to their rule, and neither can we escape from woe if we defy them nor are we ever refused blessedness if we observe their behests. This is proved by the facts of life quite as clearly as regularity of succession among actual phenomena is established by the facts of nature.

From the beginning the Ruler of the world has enforced the same moral laws.

Throughout the ages one moral law has persistently been applied to the feelings, thoughts, and purposes of every individual man, as to communities

and nations. Purity and lust, selfishness and self-sacrifice, cowardice and heroism, justice and injustice, have brought forth the same fruit, each after its kind, from the beginning of time until now—in Ancient Babylon and Egypt, as in Modern England. The existence of one Living Lord of Righteousness is essential for the persistent enforcement of one moral law. Unless there is a supreme Will the same actions could not be followed by the same results.

The history of man is not the history of a 'fall' but of a rise from glory to glory.

The history of man is the history of a progressive being. The legend of 'the fall' has a strange and touching beauty of its own—it is like the sigh of an outworn and weary man for the days of his childhood when he knew no sin and had received no wounds in the fierce battle of life—but we dismiss it from our religion. I believe in the rise and not the fall of man. We are members of a race which has ever been pressing onwards—unfolding fresh powers—discovering new truths—recognizing higher and more comprehensive duties—escaping from barbaric in-

stincts and surroundings, and establishing from age to age, in some portion of the world or other, a more wisely ordered and happier civilization. When we study the history of nations we find that each empire did some service to the world—and only fell when that service was fully rendered and it encumbered the ground. The history of religion tells the same glorious tale: every religion has been, in its day, a step in advance. The most superstitious practices and doctrines at one time, helped to uplift the souls of men. Every Christian church, every form of faith now to be found in the world, is suited to the wants of some human hearts—strengthens them to endure and toil and hope as they pass through this strange pilgrimage—and thus prepares in the desert a highway for our God.

The fact of human progress implies the existence of a righteous God.

Were there no Spiritual Power guiding the history of man; or were that Power either indifferent to the distinction between good and evil, or not good, no adequate cause could be assigned or imagined for

human progress. Why evil should exist at all, we know not; but what we do know is that it is being steadily mastered. Human progress entirely depends upon the fact that that there is a governing power of Righteousness mightier than all tendencies to evil within human hearts. Those who contend against private lusts and public wrongs are *helped* as it is recorded in the old history, were those who fought against Sisera. 'The Kings came and fought; they fought the Kings of Canaan in Taanach by the waters of Megiddo; they took no gain of money. They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera.'

The passions of men have not been permitted to have their own way—they have been overruled to righteous issues;—and no other cause can be assigned to account for this majestic fact than the existence of that moral Authority to whom we give the awful name of God.

Every one who does his duty practically is a religious man.

There are not a few who are driven by the emphasis laid upon rites, ceremonies and sacraments, into an attitude of suspicion with respect to any professions of a distinctively religious character. I am not speaking of those who have thought the matter out and are unable to satisfy themselves that there is any firm basis on which belief can stand, but of those who do not deny the existence of a living Spirit pervading and sustaining all that is, but who do not admit that they have any of those experiences which are specifically termed '*religious*,' and regard themselves as outside of the circle of interests in which '*religious*' people move; and look upon '*believers*' as dwelling in a kind of '*religious world*' of their own.

Those of whom I speak do not regard themselves definitely as unbelievers, but feel that with the affairs of this 'religious world' they have little concern;—that in fact they live in another kind of world, the world of books, of pictures, of music; the world of men and women engaged in ordinary business, and in which Town and County Councils, School Boards

and Parliament, are dominant authorities rather than Churches. In my time, I have met many excellent people who have said, 'We do not pretend to be religious.' They have been admirable workers in many a good cause; have reverenced what is just and honourable and pure; have been faithful to their friends and generous to all; but they have looked upon Religion as something for which they have had no particular gift, just as they might not have an ear for time or an eye for subtile gradations of colour. Every man, however, who *does his duty as his duty* accepts an authority beyond that of his own desires, tastes, and passions, and subordinates his life to a commanding Power of Powers. Whether therefore he avows it, or even knows it, or not—he is a *religious* man.

SUPREME LOVE AS WELL AS RIGHTEOUSNESS IS ONE OF THE FORCES WHICH HAS ITS WITNESS WITHIN US, AND IS ACTING AROUND US:

(1) Our disinterested affections belong to our nature.

(2) The demands of pure love and duty harmonise.

(3) The thrice-blessed arrangements of family life are not of our own contriving.

(4) The power ruling the world continually sends into it men and women who live and die, in the spirit in which Jesus Christ lived and died, to make their fellow creatures nobler and happier.

(5) We receive more blessings than we deserve.

(6) The very sufferings to which we are subjected may increase the tenderness of our hearts.

(7) The progress of the world is largely effected through the instrumentality of loving sympathies.

(8) We are so constituted that the conviction that our Maker loves us is the greatest of blessings.

The disinterested affections of the human heart justify the faith that its Creator is a God of Love.

We are so constituted that absolutely disinterested affections grow up. That we should love unselfishly is the will of our Maker. *How* these affections are developed is a philosophical problem—*that they have come into existence* is a revelation of the character and commandments of our Creator. A fisherman once gave the poet Coleridge an account of a boy who had been drowned the day before, but he said that he and his companions had tried to save him at the risk of their own lives, and added, 'I do not know how we ventured, but, sir, we have a *nature* towards one another.' During the recent hard winter, an Austrian peasant and his wife went to attend a wedding and left their house in the care of two boys, aged six and four. Returning home they found the bodies of their children frozen in the snow before their cottage door. It appeared that the little lads had gone out to play, and that the house door had become so frozen up that they could not force it open. On examining the frozen bodies, it was noticed that the elder child had removed his own bark shoes and drawn them over the

smaller felt-clad feet of his little brother, to protect him from the cold, leaving himself bare-footed. The younger child's body, with his fingers in his mouth and his tears frozen on his cheeks, was clasped in the embrace of the devoted elder brother. How came that child of six with that nobly tender heart? He was not the author of his own being—neither did his father or mother determine that such a heart as he had should be his. The nature of the Creator may be *known* from the 'nature' of the human heart.

So perfectly are we the offspring of a power that loves us, that the guiding law of duty is the guiding rule of love.

When any doubt arises as to what course of conduct it is right to follow, one directing law has never yet failed—let us do to others as we would have them do unto us. Let us imagine ourselves suffering what we are inclined to inflict, and our lips will be dumb when they should be dumb, and our hands still when they should be still. Let us ask how we can do good to others, and we shall have the least possible difficulty in the right conduct of our own lives. The

law of Righteousness is not hard, abstract, cold, bitter; it is the very law which binds heart to heart. Surely we must be loved beyond measure by the God who made us, when the ordainments of his sovereign Righteousness are hidden in the depths of our own mortal love! Not only is the path of duty found by taking our brethren into the counsel of our hearts, but love and duty are so blended that the very life of the one is the life of the other. Lust and murder are near to each other—strangely, terribly, madly near. Let any lie be told, or injustice committed, or purity violated, 'all for love' as it may be pleaded, love itself takes flight.

When the massacre of the Huguenots was at hand, the word was passed to faithful Catholics that they were to wear a sign upon their sleeves to distinguish them from the doomed and hated heretics. In a famous picture, a lady, young and beautiful, is represented as striving to fix upon her lover's arm the band which will save him in the impending massacre. If that bold, handsome youth will but yield to her pleading, if he will merely wear a lie upon his sleeve, all will be well; he will be spared, and gain alike his life and his love. But the infinitely tender expression

of blended strength and sorrow on his countenance, as he gently moves away the badge, shows that he esteems death preferable to an act of shame. What would have happened had that youth consented to wear the sign-mark of a faith he denied? What has happened in many a kindred case? Marriage and happiness? Not so; marriage and misery! The haunting restlessness of personal dishonour would never have left his heart, and its shadow would have fallen upon the soul of his bride. So wonderfully are we created as children of a God of love that righteousness and peace kiss each other within our souls.

The Creator of the human heart must be a God of love.

Whatever love is within man's heart must be taken as evidence of his Creator's own nature, so far as what is infinite can be understood from what is finite. The affections, equally with the faculties, responsibilities, and unconquerable hopes of our souls, are not of our own creation. We belong to this great universe. We are neither interlopers nor intruders. We are bound to all the elements, and all the elements are bound to us. We weigh the worlds and predict their courses.

We time the tides and measure the speed of the sun's rays. That our faculties are reliable is proved by experience and experiment. Following just methods of research, our minds ascertain truths which are capable of verification. Whenever a scientific discovery is made, not only is admission to a new intellectual kingdom won, but fresh evidence is offered that our power of thought can be trusted, and that our minds are not necessarily the victims of strong delusions and of lies.

Since our faculties are proved to be trustworthy by the discoveries they accomplish, the inexhaustible affections that move within us, which are part of us, which cannot be torn away from us without our ceasing to be men and women, cannot be dismissed as giving us no message concerning our relationship to our Creator; and in the midst of the direst afflictions of our hearts, when we follow their most natural promptings, they bid us trust in the love of our God. A loveless Power, moreover, could never have fashioned a human heart. A mother watching over her child, a friend holding out a helping hand to a friend, a kindly nurse soothing the pains of a sick-bed, a good man denying himself comfort, pleasure, and ease in order to save

others from ignorance and crime, cannot be more richly endowed than the source of all Life. Unless the Creator of heaven and earth and all that in them is, is inferior to man, He cannot be without a heart—and a heart at the very least as full of tenderness as a human heart.

The Power that has 'set us together' in families, has made a pure home an essential condition for civilised order, and therefore must be a God of Love.

What is the basis of civilization—on what does social order rest for its support? While just laws are essential, it is also certain that on the purity of family life the stability of empires depends. Neither bad fiscal arrangements, nor tyrannic forms of government, nor war can bring a desolation equal to that wrought by licentiousness. The home is the corner-stone of the social fabric. The sanctity of home violated, the swift and certain ruin of nations ensues. This fact proves that the history of men is guided by a *loving* as well as by a righteous Power.

That we were sent into the world as children, shows that our Creator loves us.

No method of awakening tenderness can be imagined more complete than that which places us on earth as babies in a mother's arms. Of all the wondrous works of the Almighty the creation of men and women as babes and sucklings is the most wondrous. It is the tenderest of all tender thoughts. It manifests such a delicacy of gentleness and such a minute regard for all the smallest and most playful details of innocent fondness that it could only have been devised by a Being with a loving heart. Who but a God of love could have adopted in the creation of men and women the most perfect method of uniting them in the bonds of love?

Every child is a new and loving thought of the Creator.

There is life in every child the parents cannot claim. It is not theirs, not being the result of any care they have exercised. It is far, far beyond their work, or their purpose, or their imagining. Likeness may be traced in the countenance, almost through generations; slight tricks of manner and phrase may

recall relationships to mind, but the character is essentially fresh. It is not the exact copy of the peculiarities of either father or mother. It is not even the blending of elements from either. Every child granted to a home is a new flower blossoming in the garden of the Lord.

Herein is marvellous comfort, even when there is a vacant chair at our table. If WE could claim a child; if we could say that child is OURS; WE have altogether fashioned it, arranged its faculties and blended their special powers; WE have moulded its affections; it loves us because *we* have so managed the beatings of its heart; its loss would be the destruction of *our own* sole work; we could only mourn over its loss, stricken and desolate. But beyond our planning and our deserving, a New Life visits earth and blossoms according to the pure laws of its own native loveliness. Our delight is in its nurturing, but its beauty is not of us or from us. It is bountifully lent as the sunlight is poured from heaven;—not at our command is the dawning or setting of its day; and its very presence with us is evidence that the love of its Creator is so deep that it may be trusted when He claims its life again.

Those who have toiled and suffered that the world may be redeemed from ignorance, misery, and sin, bear witness to the love of Him who sent them.

The effect of human ignorance, misery, and sin upon the happiest, wisest, and noblest of men is a ground for believing that we are bound together as a family, and are under the care of One we may rightly call 'our Father.' Instructors of the ignorant, helpers of the miserable, friends of the sinful, are constantly entering the world. It is as certain as that day will follow night, that, whatever falsehoods be believed on earth, brave thinkers will arise and speak truth upon the house-tops. The lame, the sick, the deaf, the blind, because of their infirmities, win friends. The sinful and degraded assert claims to which no resistance can be made. Instead of the pure in heart being disposed to stand aside from the guilty, and to wrap themselves closely in the proud mantle of their own sanctity, they are, as Christ was, the friends 'of publicans and sinners.'

The poor outcast woman has no friend among her associates as pitiful as her unstained sister. The street rough has no comrade among the coarse band of drunken idlers he mingles with, who cares for him

like the missionary who would win him to church and school.

How could the saviours of men from their miseries and sins have come into the world, save by the will of the Creator of all that is? and how could that Creator have sent them, unless He loves his children?

Our hearts may rely upon the love of the God and Father of Jesus Christ.

The Being from whom the spirit of Christ came may be relied upon as a faithful Creator. No Power disposed to curse our souls for ever—no Demon—no God heedless of human happiness and goodness—could have created a soul so fair! I read the life of Christ; I hear him utter his blessing upon the pure in heart, the merciful, the peace-makers, the persecuted for righteousness' sake; I follow him through village and town, and mingle with the crowd of the poor and miserable and sinful who listen gladly to his messages of immortal love; I sit with him in the house of the Pharisee as the woman who was a sinner bathes his feet with tears and washes them with the hair of her head, and hear him forgive much to those who love much;

I stand near him as he defies the hypocrites who plot his destruction, and disdains to propitiate their mean favour; I follow him to the cross and hear him forgive the foes who hated him—and I feel and believe that the God and Father of Jesus Christ is one with whom for time and eternity, I can trust the fate of all I am, all I have, all I love, and all I hope for.

The blessings we receive are so much in excess of those we deserve that we ought not to doubt the love of Him who bestows them upon us.

Life is so wondrous a gift that we are bound to *trust* its Giver, even when we cannot understand his dealings with us. The Power who has bestowed upon us minds to trace the secrets of his works, who has called us by the voice of conscience to do our duty, who has implanted within us affections that stretch beyond the grave, ought to *be relied* upon in the darkness as in the light. What precious and priceless blessings have been showered upon us! The *undeserved* gifts of God which we have received are beyond all computation. How few are there of the

choicest treasures of our lives which, if a debtor and creditor account were opened, we could be said to have honestly and fairly gained for ourselves! What have we done, what time and care and toil have we lavished for Truth and Righteousness' sake, that we should be thought worthy of being kept alive at all, still less that any of the richest joys of life should ever have been ours? For us, the stars are lustrous and the earth is fair. Saints and prophets have taught and martyrs have died that we may be saved from error and guilt. Our freedom alike as citizens and as worshippers of God has been bought with a great price, which we have not paid. For us, the pages recording the thoughts of the wisest have been written. For us, this world furnishes a thousand opportunities for useful work, which invite us and plead with us to arise and enter into the joy of the Lord, who went about doing good. Who has deserved the love that has rested upon his days—the tender care of parents, so watchful when we knew it not, and the faithfulness of friends?

So much has been given us that when blessings we crave are withheld we are bound to trust the unseen Wisdom, rather than murmuringly suspect his mercy.

One of the most marvellous revelations of the presence of the Spirit of God within the human heart, is the deepened trust in his love which often accompanies the extremity of suffering.

I have stood by the bedside of a dying woman and watched her as she fainted away from the loving care of those unto whom her heart yearned, as their hearts yearned unto her, until the fluttering pulse was still—and in the bitterness of the mystery, the question and the doubt arose, whether this life might not have been spared, and God's world have been the fairer, and His name the better known for its great and tender mercy?

In this mood of sad and terrible despondency, not from my own soul could I gather strength; I had nothing, for the moment, to plead; I could make no answer, from myself, as the murmur rose; I could only bow my head and say, 'As it must be, so it is.'

From the bed of suffering itself came renewal of holier strength; and the poor, pale, worn sufferer, with every faculty and function of this frail tenement of clay outwearied, was transfigured into an angel of consolation. I looked away in despair; she smiled

with an undying hope. I meditated, and questioned the mercy; she kept ever fresh and ever fair the cheerful loving glance of a heart at peace. I brooded over the loss of earthly blessings; she dwelt upon the thankfulness due unto her Maker for a happy life.

It is the marvellous fact, that the tried spirit trusts the most. The soul having most apparent reason to 'curse God and die,' rests itself the most quietly upon some secret sustaining Love. Those from whom the joys of earth are taken away, and whom we should expect to weep, and weep, and weep, and refuse to be comforted, because of the woe that is upon them—are visited by such high access of spiritual strength, that their chiefest care is, not for themselves who suffer, but for those who grieve. Those compelled to say 'Farewell' to friends unto whom they cling with a gentleness which during the years that have passed has entwined itself with a thousand encircling fibres around every incident of the passing day, are from some strange source gifted with power to pass alone, and with a smile, undespondent although uncompanioned, into the silent land. I doubt that proverb, sweet as it is to the ear and heart, 'God tempers the blast to the shorn lamb;' it rather seems, judging

from many a sad experience, that upon the shorn lamb cometh every wild blast; but the Great Shepherd takes the poor trembler in His arms, and presses it to His heart until it can bear the storm; and although the wild winds bring death, it learns to be of good cheer as though it knew the green pastures and the still waters to be close at hand.

From the stern discipline of life we may learn that we are watched over by a love that would make us worthy of being loved.

True love is that which uplifts to nobleness; and apart from integrity and purity of heart, love cannot be known in its fulness. That the power who created us loves us with *this* love, the very difficulties and trials of life bring sublime evidence—since by means of them, strength of character may be gained. Nothing happens to us that cannot help to make us better.

Unjust treatment can bring forth the divinest qualities of soul in those who know how bravely and generously to endure it. When was Christ so Godlike as when, nearing the cross, he breathed the prayer 'Father, forgive them for they know not what they

do'? By loss and misfortune the soul can be taught the supreme worth of the wealth the world can neither give nor take away.

The Ruler of the world is shown to be loving by the way in which the progress of the world has been and is secured through the enlargement of human sympathies.

By revolts of the world's heart, great changes, marking epochs, have been accomplished. Persecution was killed, not so much by logical arguments as by human pity for its victims. The quaint old historian Fuller practically bears witness to this when he praises King James for 'politickly' preferring 'that hereticks hereafter, though condemned, should silently and privately waste themselves away in prison rather than to grace them and amuse others with the solemnity of a public execution,' on the ground that 'this burning of hereticks much startled common people, pitying all pain and prone to asperse justice itself with cruelty, because of the novelty and hideousness of the punishment;' and that 'the purblinde eyes of vulgar judgments looked only on what was

next to them (the suffering itself) which they beheld with compassion, not minding the demerit of the guilt which deserved the same.'

High arguments were held respecting Slavery. The Bible was employed both for purposes of attack and defence. Scientific disquisitions on the natural inferiority of certain races, political defences of an established 'institution,' and even sermons justifying bondage as decreed by a kindly Providence for beneficent ends, were not lacking and received well-argued replies. But when tales were told of women sold by auction to the highest bidder—of men hunted with blood-hounds through dismal swamps—of children snatched away from their parents more ruthlessly than the very lambs were taken from the fold—then human sympathy did what reasoning failed to accomplish, and Slavery fell.

So will it be, so it is beginning to be, with respect to the stern, cruel, and terrible creeds confining the love of God alike on earth and beyond the grave to a favoured few, with which so many sects have encompassed themselves as with a wall of fire.

There is a profound meaning in the honour paid by the whole civilized world to the memories of all

good men who have toiled faithfully to lighten the burden of the world's miseries and remove the stains of its sins, whether they have been Catholics or Protestants—nay, whether Christians or Pagans, 'believers' or sceptics. When a man who has rendered high service to humanity dies, there is no sect so base as not to do him reverence and place a wreath upon his grave. It is a sign that the world's heart has risen, is rising, and will rise against the limitations upon the mercy of our God imposed by the dogmatism of ages. These changes of the heart could never have taken place had not the Power ruling the world been a loving Power.

Reliance upon the love of God is the supreme blessing of life.

There are scientific facts and laws which make this common earth more wonderful than a child's dream of fairyland.

There are strains of poetry which can never be read without hushing mortal care and, in their sweetness, absorbing our passionate human discords.

There are works of art never to be looked upon without annihilating, for the time, the sense of personal

relationships to time and space and becoming in themselves the central glories of creation, upon which it is life enough to gaze.

But facts of science, strains of poetry, works of art, give no such joy as the confidence that the love of our Creator is upon us. I speak not as a preacher, but as a man with a life to lead and a death to die; I do not speak under the influence of a sentimental enthusiasm, but I speak the sober conviction of a life, when I say that there is no knowledge of science, dearly as I love to wander among the fields of its researches and climb even a few feet upwards along the sides of the mighty mountains that arise from their midst; that there is no power of poetic imagination or artistic skill, nobly as I judge the faculty divine which creates new worlds of loveliness and connects thoughts too deep for tears with the lowliest flower that blows; that there is no wealth, keenly as I might enjoy command of worldly treasures to gratify tastes which never fail in ministering an intense delight—for which I would exchange the faith that there is a Love resting upon this world kindred to the love within human hearts; and that this Love seeks to save that which is lost, and can never forget and never forsake.

WE CANNOT THINK TOO NOBLY OF HUMAN LIFE:

(1) The Creator of the Universe is also the Creator of man.

(2) The theory that man has descended from lower forms of life does not degrade his nature; man still remains *man*.

(3) Man is not compelled to think or act wickedly by any natural faculty or feeling he possesses.

(4) There is no standard of character too high for man to hope to attain unto it.

As this earth shares the glory of the Universe, so man has within his being some part of the very glory of his Creator.

We dwell upon a star called 'Earth'; and the elements of which our bodily frameworks are composed belong to its dust. But this Earth with the dust to which our frames belong cannot be divided from the glory of the Universe itself. To dwellers in some distant planet, this Earth calmly shines, a mystery of the sky above them, a world adding to the glory of their Heaven of Heavens. Neither can the Spirit dwelling within man be divided from the Spirit sustaining all creation by its wisdom. The glory of God is the glory of his children. They follow in thought the methods of His action; they are capable of rendering willing obedience to His commands as well as of responding with love to the gracious gifts of His beneficence; and by virtue of KINDREDSHIP OF LIFE must therefore be for ever safe in His protecting care.

There is an intimate relationship between the life of man and the life of the Great Being from whom all created things have flowed and do flow continually.

Appeal may be made to many classes of facts in justification of the great faith that in a certain profound sense man is created 'in the image of God.' The mind of man appears in a very marvellous manner to enjoy the same kind of intellectual life as that which is manifested by the phenomena of the Universe itself. By the independent exercise of his own faculties man has arrived and is constantly arriving at results precisely similar to those which are physically involved in the laws of nature. The discovery of the planet Neptune is an illustration of this fact.

Apparent irregularities were noticed in the movements of Uranus. By purely mathematical reasoning, Adams and Leverrier almost simultaneously determined that there must be another planet, and pointed out the precise spot at which it might be expected to appear. To that spot the telescope was turned, and there the new planet was found. Through the action of his own mind, man knew how, under specified con-

ditions, the system of the universe must have been completed. As man thought, so it was. Where he decided that a star ought to be, there its light shone.

The old Greek maxim that God works by geometry, expresses the fact that man is capable of thinking out the conditions on which the order of nature depends; and this would be impossible had he not a mind which, however limited in its range, possesses the same essential characters as the mind of the Creator Himself.

Certain forms of architecture give delight to man as noble and beautiful. Obeying the inspiration of his own soul, he has adorned his buildings with ornament he feels to be lovely. There are records entombed within the rocks which show that the Maker of the world rejoices in the same forms and ornaments as those which man, following his own taste, has lovingly fashioned. That which is visible in nature has of course educated man's sense of beauty; but artists, guided by their own genius, have produced works characterised by a beauty precisely similar to that of fossils long subsequently disentombed from the rocks. Hugh Miller has pointed out that there is hardly a characteristic of Greek or Gothic archi-

tecture that may not be found represented in the columnar trunks of trees that have ceased to grow on earth, and in the twining of the spires and the sculpturing of mollusca long extinct. But the architects themselves had no knowledge of these facts. The builder of the Corinthian temple was not aware that he had been anticipated by the Creator of the Ulodendron.

The carver who spent his graceful skill on the adornment of Westminster Abbey was altogether unconscious that the sculptured trunks of tree ferns hidden among coal-beds far beneath the soil, had a loveliness akin to that which his own genius brought into the sight of men.

When we find that the shells of creatures inhabiting seas whose waves have ceased to roll, and the plants growing in forests that have perished in building up the land on which we dwell, exhibit in their proportions and designs the same principles as those which give art its glory, and that this has been done in a myriad cases which never came under the observation of mortal artist until these later days, we are bound to conclude that in the sense of what is beautiful the Creator has made man after His own image.

The argument may be carried yet another step :

in his moral nature man may rightly claim to be the child of God through the identity of the decisions at which he arrives by the use of his own faculties with the principles which are actually acted upon in the government of the world. The moral laws under which man is compelled to live, which he did not enact and cannot alter, are in harmony with the dictates of his own moral nature. By the physical constitution of our bodies, intemperance and unchastity are fearfully condemned. They sow the seeds of diseases which poison the life-bloom of generations and bring forth idiocy and death. These same vices stand condemned by the inward voice of the soul. It may be argued that this would not be the case unless the accumulated experience of mankind had proved the indulgence of appetite to be invariably followed by unhealthful and unhappy consequences. For the sake of argument let this be admitted. It nevertheless remains true that we possess a nature capable of being so cultivated as ultimately, through an inward sense of right, to give a verdict of its own in harmony with these outward results of actions which the Power ruling the world has decided shall come to pass independently of our desires.

The Lord our God is the God of Life in all the fulness of its large and varied interests.

The Lord God Almighty is the creator of the man of science—the philosopher—the historian—the wit and humorist—the novelist—the dramatist, the poet, and the artist. The God and Father of Abraham, Isaac, and Joseph, is also the God and Father of Shakespeare and Galileo, Milton, and Wordsworth, Michael Angelo and Beethoven. In a great library we stand in a temple of God, sublimer than is the temple of which the earth is the pavement and the star-clad sky the overarching roof.

Should the evidence that man is descended from some lower form of life prove complete, it would still remain the fact that he is the child of God.

Were we to have proof that every form of life, vegetable and animal, from diatom and rhyzopod to man, has sprung from one solitary cell by a process of evolution, so far from losing sight of God we should be guided along the actual path through which his creative energy has accomplished its perfect work

and hear the very song of the morning stars when the foundations of earth were fastened and the corner stone thereof laid, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. The possibilities of growth contained within that primal cell would testify at least as marvellously to the glory of God as a myriad separate creations of independent species. The doctrine of development is an endeavour to explain the method of creation and can no more be held to dispense with a Creator than an explanation of the metre of a song can be construed into denial of the existence of a poet. The persistent uplifting of types of being from epoch to epoch proves the ceaseless activity of a living Spirit, working out a definite purpose and manifesting Himself with an ever brightening glory.

I study the lowest type of animal life and note its jelly-like substance without any distinct organs for the discharge of separate functions; and then I study the life given to man; its capacity for heroic sacrifice, its far-reaching affections which refuse to be bound by the limitations of mortality; its unconquerable discontent with whatsoever is mean and cowardly and selfish and unjust; I study the history of Jesus Christ and mark how the heart of humanity has been conquered by his

purity, and the Power capable of commencing His work by the creation of a mere film and of developing from it, through any agencies whatsoever, beings who themselves can think and love and do their duty, and who discern in Jesus Christ the standard of character to which they are called, I recognize and adore as my Lord and my God.

Nothing in the nature of man is to be condemned as necessarily a source of wickedness in thought or conduct.

There is no organ of disease in our bodies; diseases arise from the inflammation or the inactivity or the strained activity or the decay of organs which in their healthful condition sustain us in vigorous life. Neither is any part of our spiritual nature evil in itself. In-as-much as we are the children of God our natural faculties and affections must be pronounced like all other things He has made, 'Very good.' Wrong-doing involves the misdirection of some passion which when duly ordered contributes to the excellence of our characters and our innocent enjoyment of the blessings of life.

We are never obliged to think, speak, or act wrongfully.

Individually we are unable on a thousand matters to do as we will; we are chained to a wheel of social fortune and must turn with it; but each one of us is nevertheless the monarch of an empire. No power on earth can decree what we shall think, if we choose to think; or what we shall say when we resolve to speak. The purity, generosity, kindliness of our thoughts and words are under our own control. No power can prevent us from helping to extend the influence of any principles we esteem true and just. We can follow any standard of character we choose to select. We may be mean, petty, selfish triflers or be honourable and faithful workers for the welfare of our fellow-creatures. The government of that wonderful kingdom which is 'within us' is in our own hands.

There is nothing too perfect in righteousness for the sober expectation of the children of God.

The wanderer among woods and mountains learns that there is nothing the mind can imagine too lovely or too grand to be met with as a reality of this common earth. Paint before the mind's eye any scene of which it can conceive; rive asunder giant heights;

fling between them a dashing torrent; scatter in the rapidly flowing waters huge fragments of granite; plant the mountain ash here and there in the midst of the desolation, that the crimson berries hanging from its boughs may give a glowing warmth of colour to the grey rock; place brightly green ferns on every ledge of vantage—earth can show some actual scene which will more than better any mind-painted picture.

The student of Science after years of study is compelled to say 'There is no explanation of natural phenomena too wonderful to be credible; there is no law too marvellous to be discovered in operation; I can imagine no order of nature more majestic than that which is now sustained.'

That the Creator of the heavens and the earth in their perfectness is *our* Creator also, gives a firm basis for the conviction that there is no Kingdom of Righteousness and peace too glorious to be established in time and in eternity by the strength of His right hand, and in the faithful tenderness of His love.

The most majestic hopes can most certainly be realised.

Everything that can justify glad hopes for our coming years depends upon *what we hope for*. If

the divinest conception of what life means be accepted as practically useful for daily guidance, the grandest of all hopes that can abide within human hearts, can to a very large extent be realized alike by those endowed with one talent and by those endowed with five talents; and each one of us will be able to say with gladness of heart—

> I feel the earth move onward;
> I join the great march onward.

We may justifiably hope during our coming years to become more Christ-like. Who dare say that he cannot be to-morrow more obedient to God's laws, more large-hearted, more unselfish, than he is to-day?

We may justifiably hope to be more useful in the world in the future than we have been in the past. Who dare say that he cannot help others more tenderly, and effectively, than he ever yet has done?

We may hope for wealth—for honor—for power—for leisure—for health;—and be disappointed; but if we hope to become more Christ-like and to be more useful our lives need never be failures. Nothing that happens to a man can by its own power make him unfortunate in that which concerns the glory of his manhood.

TO ESCAPE FROM OUR SINS WE MUST BE CONVINCED IN OUR HEARTS:

(1) That there is no substitute for strict obedience to the laws of God.

(2) That it is possible for us to live righteously.

(3) That we have an atonement to make to our fellow-creatures for the sorrows brought upon them by our transgressions.

(4) That we must cultivate our better feelings and not trust in our impulses alone.

(5) That life is a sacred gift for the use of which we are responsible to our Maker.

There is no salvation from the penalties of sin except in obedience to the laws of God.

It is a fact established by daily experience that no arguments, no ingenious contrivances, no prayers will avail if we scatter chaff over a garden to make it blossom with flowers; if we scamp our work and put in bad material, to render it strong and enduring; if we take poison, to protect us from death; neither will belief in any theological doctrines, however true they may be, avail to convert a sinner into a saint, unless he resolves to walk in the path of righteousness.

To sin no more is the only way of escaping from the penalties of sin.

I can see no way to 'save sinners,' except by persuading them to go and sin no more. Save by obedience to the eternal laws of righteousness, I know not how the human heart *can* be purified from its stains. A sick man can only hope for recovery as he observes the conditions of healthfulness;—so is it with the sick soul.

For a sinner to expect pardon without abandoning his sin is to cherish as hopeless an expectation as would be that of the dweller in an ill-drained house, who when stricken with typhoid fever should rely upon being healed of his disease while the exhalation of poisonous gases continues around him.

All men have a sublime power of escaping from the tyranny of their sins.

Travellers describe the quickness with which a battlefield loses all signs of devastation. A plain that has been covered with thousands of the dead and dying, that has had every cottage upon it battered to pieces, every blade of grass trampled into the dust, every boundary mark overthrown—after a year or two smiles again with a richer fertility, and is again covered with peaceful homes, guides being needed to point out where the horrible struggle but yesterday raged. A still more extraordinary recuperative force is possessed by the children of God. The burden of sin may be cast down by the weary prodigal. The indulgences once dearly prized may become hateful.

The tastes it once was a joy to gratify may become as foul odours. The sinner who has set his face Godward does not find himself like a prisoner let out on bail but certain to be brought at last to the bar of judgment to receive his inevitable punishment. To his glad and noble surprise he discovers that he has become a new creature; and, instead of being the doomed victim of an outraged King, is a welcome guest in a Father's home.

All of us, however sinful we may be, are called upon to enter the Kingdom of God.

I once heard a sermon in which the preacher attempted to show that the thief to whom Christ said, 'This night thou shalt sup with me in Paradise,' could not have been an ordinary thief. He argued that so disreputable a character as a mere thief would not have been a fit companion for Christ in Paradise. The offence, he thought, must have been political rather than criminal. The preacher shrank from believing that Christ went to Paradise in bad company. What a caricature of the Gospel! Christ really and

truly came into contact with the sinful. How did he treat them? He appealed to them as children of God, who might arise and escape from their iniquities. He spake of the desire of God that the lost should be found, the wandering sheep be brought back to the pasture, the prodigal return to his home. But Christ did not lower one demand of God's righteousness to suit (as it might have been pleaded) the weak and wayward nature of man. This Teacher, who addressed himself to the worst of men—who avowed that he had come, not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance—bade them 'be perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.' The wonderful result was, that they did not shrink from Christ as from one who was asking too much from them—who was calling them to an impossible task—who was lifting up a standard they could never hope to attain. Instead of being driven to despair by Christ's demand for an unsullied sanctity, they felt the stirrings of a new life full of hopefulness and joy. So with all of us will it be, if we listen to the appeal made by every good man to our better selves.

The desire to make atonement to our fellow-men for any sin we commit should be at least equal to our longing for the forgiveness of God.

Standing in God's presence and confessing many a wandering thought and unconsecrated deed, the desire for God's forgiveness ought not, as I believe in all soberness and reverence, to be my all-absorbing emotion. The condition under which forgiveness is to be obtained should be one of my chief anxieties.

When a child has done wrong, what does a parent most desire to see? What brings the purest, deepest joy to his troubled heart? What but *this*—the child's effort to do better! Let the child struggle to subdue its evil temper, forgiveness will leap of its own sweet accord from heart to heart. As a matter of course, the child is forgiven when the better path is chosen. Forgiveness *then* cannot be kept back; it is granted fully and freely through a divine necessity of love. If our God have the heart of a father this pardon will equally be won by our stricter obedience to His laws. Every sin we commit, however, terribly injures some of our fellow-creatures, and to man an atonement for it is due.

When we have wronged a man, assuredly we

should desire to be forgiven; with forgiveness will come a peace otherwise unattainable. But the truly penitent heart will rise to a nobler height than that to which the mere longing for forgiveness will carry it. Its first, its strongest, its most passionate effort will be to make an adequate restoration. What did Zacchæus the publican say when, struck to the soul by the tenderness of Christ, he saw the guilt of his extortion? Zacchæus did not run about shrieking for pardon. He did not shed tears of misery because he was afraid he could never be forgiven. No metaphysical speculation about the impossibility of reconciling justice with mercy, flung his soul into dark despair. He took the straightforward, honourable, manly course. He did not degrade his soul still more terribly by a weak and weeping sentimentality. He did not assume the attitude of an anxious inquirer timorously and tremblingly crying for salvation. With resolute promptness he resolved to make atonement for the wrong he had done. 'And Zacchæus stood, and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord! the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.' What a grip of

the hand one could have given to that man! It was well done, Zacchæus! Having decided not only on abandoning his wicked gains, but on punishing himself by the infliction of a heavy fine, forgiveness came to him unsought. What he had never pleaded for was granted. 'And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation' (mark the word; nothing less than salvation,) 'come to this house.'

To redeem a man from sin, appeal to what is noblest within him.

How are we delivered from our sins? Let us turn to the great Deliverer and see how he did his work. Christ redeemed man by appealing to the divine spirit within him. Around Christ real sinners gathered —not those who were sinners only in the eyes of the Pharisees—not mere comfortable sinners confessing their trangressions as a matter of pious routine—but men and women who were tempted to the uttermost and betrayed by mortal passion;—and he saved them by treating them as children of God who had power to arise and escape from their iniquities. Feeling alone can conquer feeling; a noble passion must be aroused that an ignoble one may be mastered.

Our worst sins are committed through lack of reverence for the sanctity of life.

How could men pollute their bodies, did they esteem themselves temples of God? How could we play fast and loose with truth and falsehood, justice and injustice, generosity and meanness, selfishness and self-sacrifice, as our interests, tastes, conveniences, circumstances, passions may prompt, did we sufficiently honour ourselves as being souls endowed by the very Creator of the Universe itself with the power to see the light of His light, feel the love of His love, and be His fellow-workers in the hastening of His Kingdom? Surely, to sin would then be to us worse than to fill a Cathedral with rubbish and filth!

We must bravely endure as purifying fires any punishments that may follow our sins.

Sin is no light matter. It is a curse within and without, and it brings its inevitable penalty. We must not expect that if we are drunkards we shall escape the punishment due to drunkards. Does any man escape it? Is there any miracle to stop the physical effect of his indulgence? We must not expect to lie and not to receive the punishment due to liars, to be unchaste and

not receive the penalty of unchastity. Do you say this is a hard gospel? I say, do you think God would love us better if He made sin less terrible? Is it not the sign of God's dearest love that He would make us His noble, pure and upright children? Would it be better for the world if men could lie and cheat and be impure, and then, by the special interference of God, every bad effect be lightly wiped away? God's punishments must be redeeming in their influence, because, being perfectly good, He cannot endure that iniquity should be eternal. Is it honourable for a man ashamed of sin to bow down before God, and say, 'Father, do not pain me'? Is it not more manly to say, 'Father, touch me with Thy purifying fire, so that the sin may be burnt out of my soul'? Is not true penitence the desire to get rid of the guilt itself? If a servant has wronged you, and should come to you and say, 'Treat me as though I had committed no crime,' should you respect him as much as you would, should he say, 'Let me work out the penalty, put me through any discipline you like, only let me prove that I am sorry for my sin'? And so I bow down before God, and cry, 'Father, if need be, fill my heart with sorrow; only do this, take my iniquity away from me.'

TO KNOW THAT WE OUGHT NOT TO LIVE FOR OURSELVES ALONE IS A PRIMARY CONDITION FOR LEADING A NOBLE LIFE.

(1) Enthusiasm for humanity is the divinest passion of the human soul.

(2) The unfortunate have special claims upon the fortunate which it is ignominious and degrading not to acknowledge.

(3) The highest self-sacrifice does not involve the sacrifice of any duty we owe to ourselves.

(4) All the purest delights of life may be ours when we sacrifice ourselves for the welfare of others.

(5) Sacrifices that are disagreeable at first to make should be welcomed as opportunites for the perfecting of our characters.

(6) The very feeling that our labours for others are *sacrifices* will pass away when we perform them faithfully.

The lover of his fellow-men hopeth all things and endureth all things.

Who is the enthusiast of humanity?—such an enthusiast as I am moved by all the power and authority of my religion, first and foremost of all things, to pray that I may become? The enthusiast of humanity, especially rejoices in all the bravest, most loving, self-sacrificing deeds recorded in the history of man--although performed by few, they mark for him sublime possibilities for all the children of God, and are majestic prophecies of the world that is yet to be. His heart beats as he hears of the captain standing by the sinking ship until all are saved; the soldier carrying a wounded comrade from the battle field amid a storm of bullets; the miner penetrating dark and dangerous shafts in which the air is charged with poison and flames, to rescue his comrade; the surgeon tending the sick in the haunts of pestilence.

He reverences with a boundless reverence, those who have had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings; yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment; who have been stoned, sawn asunder, tempted, slain with the sword, for righteousness' sake.

He enthrones as his masters, lords and kings, those who have been the world's outcasts, because the world's redeemers—who have opened the prison house for the oppressed and made the blind see and the deaf hear.

He watches and aids to his utmost power, the work of those who would bring home the prodigal; drag the stained woman from haunts of debauchery; bring young children from the gutter to the school; and replace by angel presences of pure and holy feelings, the demons of coarse passion which have entered into human souls.

The enthusiast of humanity learns from all that has been done by man for man never to despair; and his confident hope, justified by the lives of those who have strived, toiled, and died for the ungoldy, for the miserable, and for the wronged—is, that

A brighter morn awaits the human day.

The fulness of a divine life can only be known when we toil for the welfare of others.

What is a noble life? Not simply a life adorned by gracious culture;—not simply a life rich in the sweet joys of refined tastes and personal affections;

but a life spent in the unselfish service of man. The noblest man is the humblest servant of his fellow-creatures. He is as 'a nerve o'er which do creep the else unfelt oppressions of this earth'; he is the unlooser of heavy burdens; he is the leader of forlorn hopes for truth and freedom and righteousness' sake; he is the friend of publicans and sinners; he is the bringer of glad tidings to those in the bonds of their lower passions; he is the teacher of the ignorant, the uplifter of the fallen and the champion of those who have no helper. The world's iniquities and the world's miseries are heavy burdens on his soul; and he cannot endure to dwell in peace and ease and comfort, while *they* remain unredeemed and unrelieved.

The supreme proof that a man is good is the unconscious influence he exerts in making others good.

It was said of an eminent physician that he 'made his mark in the town in which he lived *by the number of men he helped to make good*.' A finer tribute could scarcely be paid to any man's memory.

Those influences which come out from a man, whether he will or no, and often beyond his conscious

knowledge, reveal his real character, and constitute the highest or the meanest work he does in God's world. A transparently sincere reverence for the supreme righteousness of God must indeed abide within the heart of any man, who, as he carries on his ordinary calling, by the silent power of his character *helps to make men good.* No hard, dry, didactic moralist can exert such an influence; whoever touches the hearts of his fellow-men with a love of divine goodness, must have deep and sweet human sympathies. He must not only be pure himself, he must be lovingly patient with mortal infirmities. To be a giver of good advice is one thing; to be a man in whose presence an evil word cannot be spoken is another.

'Behave generously to the unfortunate and disappointed' is the Christian's watchword.

'For Christ's sake,' tender care for the poor, the maimed, the blind, the deaf, the sick, the disappointed, the unsuccessful, and the dying sprang up within the Christian Church. Men sought out the bruised and the wounded, leaving them no longer

to mourn and perish unheeded and despised. The whole spirit of civilization in ancient days was 'woe to the conquered. Woe to those conquered by infirmity or poverty—let them suffer—the gods are not with them or they would not be unblessed. Woe to those fallen by the wayside, dropped out of the line of march. Woe to those who cannot hold their own against any comer, and whose arms are broken by stronger hands.' Not the slightest remorse was felt in dooming the defeated gladiator to death. 'He is beaten in fair fight; let him die,' was the frequent verdict of the crowd, 'Make way for the victor!' was the perpetual shout. 'Let kings follow at his chariot wheels. Let the trumpets sound. Let armed legions press on, and the world acknowledge the Master who can conquer it.'

With the Master of Nazareth came a new spirit of merciful regard for the defeated. 'The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted; to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.' At the great tenderness

of the words which fell from Christ's lips, the wearied learnt to smile, the despairing to hope, and the down-trodden to re-gather strength, and a certain Divine Spirit was breathed into the world which reached the by-ways of life, and sought out haunts of misery, and wheresoever it reached taught the weak things of earth to confound the mighty.

There are duties we owe to ourselves which ought never to be sacrificed for the sake of others.

As children of God, we are bound to preserve our own souls from pollution, and demands may be made upon us involving it may be the happiness or the supposed happiness of our fellow-creatures which we ought emphatically to repudiate.

Many and many a time has marriage with a man unloved been pressed upon a woman, for the sake of others. By the marriage, perchance her family may be saved from bankruptcy or her father from the exposure of some shameful but secret deed. Some women have consented and the record of their life-long misery has been described by poet and novelist

in minutest detail. They have denied themselves and suffered horribly.

Other women have refused; they have found the proposal too revolting for acceptance; they have been utterly unable to sacrifice their virgin purity; they could not be forced to deny themselves; and they also have suffered, and the pillows on which they have rested their weary heads have been bedewed with many tears. Which of these women have most nobly borne their cross? Surely those who have not denied themselves and who have shrunk from the unutterable degradation of a hatefully unworthy marriage.

Men are not unfrequently pressed, and hardly pressed, to profess belief in a creed which they do *not* believe. Not only their own careers, but the paths of those dependent upon them will be made infinitely pleasanter, if they will but consent.

In this case, for a man to deny himself is to deny what is to him the very truth of God, and hence it is practically to deny his God. A great dignitary of the church pleaded with Luther when he was on his trial for heresy that all he had to do was to repeat a little word of six letters, *revoco*, nothing more, everything could then be arranged and all his troubles would cease! 'We must

never act contrary to conscience,' was the reply. That saying of Paul's touching Christ is magnificently instructive for all Christians, '*He cannot deny himself.*'

A supreme joyousness of mind, heart, and soul will be won by honest efforts to be of some use in the world.

The happiest people I have ever known have been those who have lived in the world as its servants; the most miserable, those who have mistakenly or morbidly or cynically felt that they could do no good to any one. 'I am a poor useless creature'—this cry reveals the profoundest depth of wretchedness, and it is a cry no human being need ever utter. Everyone can find some fellow-creature less happy, or less fortunate, or more afflicted than himself, and minister to his wants. Honest witness can always be borne to some great principles of faith and conduct. Some noble cause of truth and justice can always be promoted. Some social, civic, or national reform can always be helped onward. The life of the hardest toiler who tries to do some good in the world is infinitely a more cheerful one than the life of the richest of useless men with

every luxury at his command. A lady of large experience of what is called 'Society' once said that the most miserable man she had ever met had ten thousand pounds a year.

We serve our brethren whenever we can make them feel that our hearts are longing for their deliverance from all evil.

I have heard of a young fellow who was in the habit of betting; he felt that he was on the way to destruction, but the gambling passion was too strong within him to be resisted. He told his Sunday school teacher that he had given up many bad habits, but that from this one he did not feel able to escape. 'Were you always with me,' he said, 'I might manage it.' 'I cannot always be with you,' replied his teacher, 'but when and where do you gamble?' 'Oh, every day at the dinner hour, I go down to the public house at one o'clock,' was the answer. 'Well, I will tell you what I will do,' said his teacher; 'every day as the clock strikes one I will pray for you.' The young fellow was conquered. He came after a day or two and said, 'I shall bet no more. Yesterday I tried to

go to the public house and I could not. I thought what a shame it was that you should be praying for me and that I should be gambling at the public house, and I could not do it.'

We may be thoroughly self-sacrificing and yet enjoy the world in which God has placed us.

What agonies have men endured in attempting to deny themselves! Look upon the great pictures of the old saints in every gallery in Europe—how emaciated are their bodies; what fearful lines of suffering are drawn upon their countenances—yet how peaceful the calm in the depths of their heaven-searching eyes! When I have looked upon some of these pictures of self-tortured saints and read their lives, I have been awestruck by the divine peace which they attained. In these days when mammon is so admiringly worshipped; when personal comfort is so dearly cherished that it is a hard matter for many to 'put themselves out of the way' a hair's breadth for their soul's sake; when such easy and attractive ways of serving God are so diligently sought; when the slightest inconvenience in connection with a religious

service so fatally affects its support—I cannot scorn those who hungry and thirsty endured all hardships so that they might cleanse themselves from sin. I cannot, however, accept this ancient ideal of a self-sacrificing life although many noble men have been led onwards to supreme heights of piety as they have breathed the prayer,

> 'teach me to fly
> 'The poisonous world and all its charms defy;'

give me

> 'Of heavenly joys a sweet foretasting view,
> 'That I on earth may only heaven pursue.'

The world is *not* 'poisonous;' it is God's own creation, and under His government. To think only of Heaven while we are upon earth, is practically to tell God that we despise the blessings which He with free and bounteous hand offers for our acceptance. Only a graceless child would tear to pieces the bright picture-book its mother presents to-day, because it expects a more precious gift to-morrow.

What then is self-sacrifice? Exact definition of anything that has *life* is impossible; and the spirit of self-sacrifice is nothing unless it be *alive* within us;

but a definition of self-sacrifice sufficiently clear for practical guidance may readily be given. In matters of pleasure, self-sacrifice is habitual regard for the happiness of others; in matters of duty it is willingness to surrender any gift we have whether it be bodily strength, or health or comfort or personal taste, whenever it is required for the preservation of our integrity of character, or for some service of God and man which it is in our immediate power to render.

God gives us work in the world to do, which is not always in accord with what we would choose or what we would like; and by so doing strengthens our characters and teaches us how to become good and faithful servants in whom He is well pleased.

There is one evil spirit which may be christened the *do-what-I-choose* spirit; another, its twin brother, which may be christened the *do-what-I-like* spirit, and both have to be exorcised and cast out if any part of the world's work is to be rightly done. The faithful servants of God and man accept the conditions imposed upon them by the circumstances besetting their tasks, whether they have chosen or not

chosen, whether they like or dislike them. Those who undertake public offices, in their church or in their town or in the government of their country, because they want honourable positions, or love notoriety, or expect compliments, or from any other motive than the desire to be useful to their fellow-creatures, will never render thoroughly honest and helpful service. Their advice will be tainted by self-interest as by a poison. Their methods of action will be those that bring grist to their own petty mills. Whenever they are not personally pleased they will not exert themselves, no matter what their cause may suffer through their neglect.

The faithful servants of God and man make no bargain to receive so many rewards for the discharge of so many duties. They do what they have undertaken to do—and that is the beginning and end of their heart's desire. *These* are the men and women whose voluntary work is as diligently, punctually, and systematically performed as though they were dependent upon it for the receipt of a large salary.

An unselfish spirit will at last be free from all consciousness of making any sacrifice in acting unselfishly.

Two illustrations may give the key to what unselfishness of soul means.

(1) Wordsworth speaks of the 'best portion of a good man's life' as being

> 'His little nameless, unremembered acts
> Of kindness and of love.'

And these words contain an almost perfect description of the nature of a purely unselfish spirit.

With a purely unselfish spirit, acts of kindness and of love come out of the character so naturally that they are not remembered—they are matters of course, they are part of the day's ordinary work; no pride is taken in them; they are not made themes for boasting; there is no notion of condescension or of favour-giving connected with them. They are nameless acts often when at their best. The tone of a voice, the manner of an action, the direction given to a conversation, the way in which the slightest business is transacted, a merely passing remark on a trivial matter may show wonderful unselfishness of soul.

The unselfish soul does not require great occasions and exceptional opportunities for its fullest activity—it does not reserve its strength for special occasions—it approaches the very glory of the Creator, who fashions a weed as perfectly as a flower, an atom as marvellously as a world.

(2) Some friend said to the famous preacher Irving, concerning something he had done, 'This will do you no good,'—meaning 'good' in a worldly sense. 'That is a reason for doing it,' replied Irving. 'I am thoroughly pleased with him,' was the comment of Charles Lamb. When any word or deed of ours will do good to others, although 'no good' to ourselves, not only not to shrink from it, but to embrace the opportunity of doing it as a privilege, *this* is to rise to the Divine height of a supreme unselfishness, and to lose all feeling that we are personally making any *sacrifice* at all.

THE DUTIFUL, LOVING, AND CHEERFUL LIFE REQUIRED BY THE SPIRIT OF A RATIONAL PIETY HAS GUIDING PRINCIPLES, RULES, AND EXERCISES WHICH NEED TO BE THOUGHT OUT AND DELIBERATELY ACCEPTED THAT THEY MAY BE THOROUGHLY KNOWN AND CAREFULLY PRACTISED.

Day by day and year by year, we become either better or worse men and women.

The physical world is not precisely the same at this moment, as it was an hour ago. The rain has washed some soil from one place to another; the river has worn away some fraction of the bulk of a solid rock; the sea has *here* encroached upon the shore and *there* the shore upon the sea; the ever-trembling crust of the earth has shifted its position, and though this may have happened to an incalculably small extent, happened it has, and in millions of years vast changes will result from its slow movements. In the same way our characters are not precisely the same as they were at this time last year. So far as we have not effectively restrained our evil tempers we have become their more obedient slaves; so far as we have indulged our selfish desires they have gained more unchallenged authority over us; so far as we have been untrue to our purer affections, passions that are not hallowed hold us more firmly in their grasp.

But God be thanked! Righteousness can become a habit of life as well as iniquity, and love can become

an instinct as well as jealousy or ill-will. By doing our duty to-day, we are strengthened for the discharge of the duties of to-morrow; and the more tenderly we love, the more powerful are the unconscious impulses which fill our lives with 'little unremembered acts of kindness and of love.'

In our spiritual life we never can *stand still*. Our characters are either being injured by the conversion of our faults into customs; or ennobled by the increased influence given to every consideration of duty and love, by constancy of obedience to their commands.

Two great test-questions to help us to discover how we are actually living are these:—(1) *What just now had we to leave earth should we take away with us?* (2) *What should we leave behind us?*

What just now had we to leave earth should we *take away with us*? What kind of minds and hearts have we to carry into the silent land? Apart from everything *outside* of us, our professions, and our repute, what is within our souls? Our affections, what we love most tenderly; our reverence, what we esteem highest and best; our desires, what we hope

for most sincerely; our delights, what we enjoy most thoroughly; these things are our life, they constitute the man. Nothing save our love, our reverence, our desires, our hopes, can we carry away when the 'silver cord is loosed and the golden bowl is broken.'

What should we leave *behind us* were we now to die? Some people seem to cherish an extraordinary pride in hoarding up their money, and contemplate with satisfaction the surprise at the extent of their fortunes which will be awakened when death reveals the secret. They make scant use of their money outside of the range of personal luxuries while they live, but appear chiefly to prize an abundant surplus—for the sake of leaving it behind them. Surely the very strangest of delights! To leave behind the sweet memory of a gentle and affectionate life, with an unstained honour and an ever-helpful kindliness; the memory of one worthy of being loved; the memory of a true and faithful friend and a brave lover of righteousness and truth:—*this* is the supremely worthful legacy of legacies, 'more to be desired than gold, yea than much fine gold.'

There is no distinction between that which is practically useful and that which is divinely good.

We so perpetually hear of 'necessary' strokes of policy which treat the plain rule of right as inadequate for the government of men, and in our own characters we are so conscious of weaknesses weighing down to earth nobler aspirations, that at times we despondingly question whether a pure and perfect sanctity is possible, and whether we might not try, with equal wisdom, to transfer the hues and harmonies of evening to the dull, dead canvas in a painter's studio as struggle to be upright before God. But to regard a moral law as inapplicable to human affairs and our own personal conduct is surely to question the worth and power of the very Righteousness of God himself. Just as a husbandman if he would raise a crop of wheat in his field cannot treat the laws affecting the growth of grain as too perfect for the soil of earth, so no common labourer, merchant or statesman can with impunity thrust moral law aside as too strict for our frail mortality. Since God is God, His laws must be the only healthful guides for conducting the most ordinary affairs of earth, and for nations, as for men, what is

just must be as practically useful as it is alone loveable. Righteousness must be brought down from dreamland to the heart of the crowded city; and purity instead of being the vision of a sighing fancy must be resolved into the demand of a present Lord. There is no such thing as a necessary evil.

We need to be on our guard against being ashamed of our best thoughts and impulses and purposes.

There is a false shame which sometimes endangers our faithfulness to what we know to be pure and loving. Did you never hear of interviews between two contending parties, when both have met with a friendly purpose in their hearts; when both have been willing to forgive and forget—and yet both have been ashamed to say the first kind word, and they have separated, unreconciled? There has been a false shame about being the first to yield, and so the old enmity has remained. When young men, really unpolluted, chance to get into the company with the dissipated, do they not sometimes affect a certain amount of sympathy with vices their secret hearts revolt from, and feel ashamed to urge one

word for righteousness against the bold bragging of unblushing sinners? When the man of the world in the mean, bad sense—the man of the world who can 'speak fair' to any wrong, and credit any evil tale, and make a mock of the divine simplicity of purity and honesty—when such a one and the Christian meet, does it not sometimes happen that the so-called Christian is more ashamed to speak of God than the man of the world of vice, and dreads more the being laughed at for his scruples than the being unfaithful to himself? Sometimes do we not plan a gentle deed or meditate a gentle word, and leave the deed undone and the word unsaid through dread of being thought 'foolish' and because our pride more revolts from our becoming the subject of a possible sneer than our heart dreads the quenching of its spirit?

We ought to be nobly discontented with ourselves.

There are two kinds of discontent. There is a paltry and unworthy discontent, which is a grumbling dissatisfaction with the work given us to do, the rewards allotted to us, and the honours bestowed

upon us. There is a noble discontent which springs from a profound reverence for the holiness we have not—such holiness as that which shone upon the world like the mid-day sun, in the life of Christ. It is the discontent of the most richly endowed man of genius who always believes that his best work could be better done. It is the discontent of the humblest Christian who, like the publican in the temple, stands afar off and beats his breast and cries 'God, be merciful to me a sinner.' Spiritual growth is quickened by the discontent of reverence.

There can be no true gentleness of soul without moral courage.

Perfect gentleness is a quality of the soul as rare as it is lovely. Many a right-worthy, honourable, dutiful man is not gentle. In truth some prejudices not unnaturally arise which throw gentleness into the background. It is confounded with amiability. Simple amiability is not to be despised. It is the combination of a desire to please with a readiness to be pleased. It may, however, be accompanied by weakness of will. A simply amiable man may

easily be over persuaded to do this and to do that of which his conscience disapproves; his desire to give pleasure may betray his moral judgment; his willingness to be pleased may blind him to the awful realities of sorrow and sin.

It is on record that great crimes have been committed by 'amiable' people, and the reason is not far to seek—they are so eager to take the easiest path that they brush away obstacles without remorse. I was once personally acquainted with a doctor, who was found guilty of murdering his wife. He was hardly pressed for money and saw a way of escape from pecuniary difficulties by marriage to a rich woman when his wife was dead. But he enjoyed considerable popularity as an *amiable* man. He spoilt his children; strove to please everybody he met; and was in no way ill-tempered; yet he could commit a brutal crime for the sake of gaining personal comfort.

Moral courage is absolutely essential for perfect gentleness of character. Only the morally strong can be gentle to the sinner while they hate the sin, for they alone know on the one hand the beauty of holiness, and on the other hand the wretchedness

to which a stained heart is doomed. Only the morally strong can be gentle in dealing with errors, for they alone know the worth of faithfulness to personal convictions, however superstitious those convictions may be. Only the morally strong can be gentle amid the annoyances, the conflicts, and the false judgments which abound in social life, for they alone are sufficiently protected by the consciousness of the worth of their own motives, and have a sufficient joy in the Kingdom of God that is within them, to prevent them from taking offence at anything other people may think, say, or do about them.

What we look for, that we find.

The sparrow looks for grain, the cat for a mouse, the wolf for a lamb,—and each creature finds its prey.

If we look for bad men, we shall find them; but if we look for loving, sweet, and holy souls, they also will be found.

If we search for faults in the characters of those around us, faults in abundance we shall discover; but if we search for whatsoever things are pure and lovely, we shall learn how much better our acquaintances and friends are than we had in our ignorance imagined.

If we fancy that there are no opportunities for usefulness open to us, we deceive ourselves—we have but to make diligent inquiry for them, and we shall have our exceeding great reward.

Our best feelings are for every-day use.

In old-fashioned households the best furniture used to be carefully wrapped up in concealing and protecting cloths, which were only taken off on the exceptional occurrence of social parties, weddings, and funerals. We are often in real danger of treating our best feelings in the same way, and reserving them for special occasions. I have read of a young lady whose lover had sailed for New Zealand. The vessel had not been heard of for a long time, and she wrote to an intimate friend entreating her to make inquiries, 'for (said she) you know it is of no use wasting my feelings, and I should not like to go on thinking about him when it is of no use; you see the uncertainty makes me so unsettled.'

This curious revelation of one of the by-paths along which human feelings run 'writes large' that kind of economy in the use of our noblest purposes

which hampers our advancement towards the highest standard of life.

Commonplace circumstances, however, often make even more strenuous demands upon our moral energy than do exceptional events. It is more wearying and tedious to walk along a dusty road than to climb a mountain height. I once asked one of my children to go for a walk with me along an uninteresting path. 'I am too tired,' was the reply. 'Let us go up that hill,' I said, pointing to an eminence that rose to the sky above us. 'Oh, yes!' was the prompt answer, given with kindling eye and quickened step.

Petty cares need great affections to prevent them from disturbing our tempers. Small, insistent, and troublesome tasks require large ends and aims that they may be diligently and faithfully performed.

The meanest tasks when discharged as duties to God and man, will become 'most divinely fair.'

I remember once standing upon a vantage ground overlooking a scene which appeared dull, dreary, uninteresting. Dim mists blurred the outlines of every hill; the plains and valleys had no brightness of

verdure; the waters of the sea that poured themselves into the inland-stretching bay were as leaden in hue as the sky above them; the sky itself hung low down, as though it were the dingy roof of a comfortless tent. I saw the same scene once again, when the sun shone upon it with unclouded majesty. *Then*, the hills wore the visible and outward signs of grace, dignity, and aspiration mingled together; the plains and valleys were as rich in their gleesome fertility as any Eden-garden of a poet's dreams; the waters of the sea were alive with sparkling, radiant smiles; the clear sky over-arched all, with that tenderness of colour with which it touches the heart as well as charms the eye, and its shadowless infinity made the soul feel as boundless as itself;—and I heard a voice falling, as it were, from the depths of space and saying, 'Behold I am here; this is holy ground!'

Even thus when the grandeur of duty is felt, the dreariest demand upon our time and energy will be brightened, and our very difficulties will become our brave delights.

We have to learn how to love, just as much as we have to learn how to walk and how to speak.

The impulses of our hearts are as likely to lead us astray as is the evidence of our senses. We see the sun move through the sky—the observation needs correction. A certain feeling arises in our hearts—but unless we study what is loving and what is unloving we may be full of envy, jealousy, and ill-will and *not know that this is the case.* Three helpful rules may be laid down for the correction of emotional impulses. (1) We must form a habit of carefully calculating the effects of all words and actions upon other people—we inflict more misery upon others through want of consideration than through deliberate purpose. (2) We must expect no more love from others than we have love to give to them; and no larger services from others than we are prepared to render them. (3) We must make the happiness of others, quite as steadily and systematically and deliberately as daily business, an object of our lives.

Never laugh at the Don Quixotes of the world.

To me, 'Don Quixote' is one of the most pathetic books in literature. Its hero dared all things for an ideal nobleness. True, he defended the honour of his Dulcinea who had no honour—but it was the honour of a lady for which he fought. True, he charged a wind-mill—yes; but he believed it a terrific Giant. The besetting danger of a commercial civilization is the establishment of an ideal of Selfishness—the picturing One's Self as rich and prosperous, and bowing down before *that* picture and concentrating all efforts upon becoming like unto it. A Don Quixote is a better and a greater man than one who never lifts a little finger to defend a cause he deems divine, or than one who esteems his own personal aggrandisement as having a greater claim upon him than any interest of his fellow-men, his town, or his country. The Don Quixotes of the world are the salt which saves it from the corruption of its selfishness. Rather than laugh at them, laugh at those who gain the whole world and lose their own souls!

By sacredly cherishing the memories of the Saints of God, we shall learn the divine possibilities of our own lives.

The poorest, most wayworn and passion-tossed wanderers cannot escape from their brotherhood with the saints of God. A family tie can never be broken. As we can never cease to be brothers of our brothers, we can never be other than brethren of the noblest of the noble. Their Father is our Father. The bravest and the meanest, the false and the true, are members of one home-circle; one kind of life unites them as God's children just as one kind of blood courses through their veins. Every good man therefore shows to a bad man, if he has eyes to see, the standard of character to which, by virtue of his kindredship of nature, he also may attain. The well-beloved of God reveal to all of us who turn to them the riches of our own inheritance; and the divine possibilities of our meaner souls. In seasons of weariness, doubt, and despair, when we gloomily distrust ourselves and see no help near, they thus stretch forth their very hands from heaven to uplift and strengthen us.

Those who fail and those who succeed in the world may have equal shares of the riches of the Kingdom of God.

Emerson sadly asks, 'Where are our young men?' Where, in middle life, are our young enthusiasts—those ready to dare and do all things for justice, those who believed all things and hoped all things? Years ago, I remember sailing down the Clyde with a man of some slight note in those days, although now forgotten, who was bound for an emigrant ship. He had been a preacher—fervid, eager, thorough! I had heard him denounce all selfishness and hypocrisy, and proclaim the dawn of a new civilization. I expected to hear him speak of his sacred mission in the new world towards which he was journeying, and of his high hopes when enjoying the fresh opportunities of a land free from the burden of restrictive customs and ancient prejudices. I can never forget the shock I felt when he explained that he had discovered that nothing could be done in this world without money; and money he intended to make. The fire of his prophetic fervour had burnt out—dust and ashes, dust and ashes only remained! I was very young; but I

recall at this moment the exact spot on the ship's deck where I stood and wondered whether, as I knew more of life, the same cloud would also fall darkly, drearily, upon my heart; and from that hour I learnt how grave the need of watchful prayer to be delivered from that wisdom of the world which is the death of the soul.

Thank God, experience has but deepened the faith that, when the tale of life is told, for those who have succeeded *in any earthly sense* and those who have failed; for the prosperous and the disappointed; for the successful and the unsuccessful; for those unto whom everything seems given, and for those from whom everything seems taken away—there is one common blessing—the blessing that falls in richest measure upon those who are purest in heart. I care not to terrify the soul by calling up imaginary phantoms from the dark abyss of our tremendous ignorance; but the fact cannot be hidden—this world is as a vanishing shadow for every soul. It must soon pass; two lines at the end of a newspaper will chronicle our disappearance; yet

> Methinks, day
> Should lose his light when men do lose their shames,
> And for the empty circumstance of life
> Betray their cause of living.

Earthly affections and duties are Heavenly sanctities.

In that wonderful vision which fell upon the Seer of Patmos, when he saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, descending out of Heaven from God, it is recorded that adornments of jewels and gold flashed upon his sight. He saw walls garnished with sapphire and emerald and amethyst and beryl; buildings of jasper; pavements of gold; gates of pearls. From whence came this garnishment? From earth and earth alone. The gold and pearls and precious stones from the rocks and seas of earth were uplifted to Heaven; and again descending, became adornments of the New Jerusalem—type and symbol of the eternal truth that the sweet affections and heroic duties of this life are the very sanctities of the Kingdom everlasting, and that the glory of the redeemed earth is the joy of the Heaven of Heavens.

Many gifts of God, hitherto unenjoyed, may be had for the asking.

Blessings far more numerous than even our brightest day-dreams picture are around us, simply

waiting for an open eye and an open ear, an open mind and an open heart, for their reception.

Who can say that he thoroughly understands and feels all the wonder and the loveliness of the world; that great books cannot yield him more delight than he has yet won from them; that his joy in his friends and comrades in life's pilgrimage may not be greater; that he has not yet to learn some of the happiness that unselfish generosity of thought and speech and deed are capable of yielding? In January I received a box of flowers from the Riviera. It was wonderful to think that while our own country is frost-bound, there was a land within two days' journey in which rose-buds were opening and anemones were carpeting the ground with their gorgeous colours, and carnations were only needing evening protection from the mistral. A greater wonder is near at hand. *That* wonder is the glory of the flowers that will blossom within our souls, in spite of the dreariness of so many mortal experiences and in the very mid-winter season of our hearts—if we will but give free entrance to the sunlight which our Creator is ever pouring forth from His Throne in an unchecked flow of exhilarating and exalting radiance.

IT WILL HELP US TO BEAR OUR TRIALS AND SUFFERINGS TO REMEMBER THAT —

(1) There are more reasons why we should *trust* rather than distrust our Creator.

(2) Our joys are given to us by the same God who apportions to us our sorrows.

(3) Our disappointments often bring unexpected blessings in their train.

(4) Many defeats are better than victories.

(5) Our gladsome experiences may be kept stored up in our hearts for happy use in seasons of affliction.

(6) This earth is but the *home* of our childhood even when our years are many.

(7) Our friends may live with us in our hearts, even when they are lost to sight.

There are more grounds for trusting than for distrusting our Creator.

In the midst of the woes of life, our highest wisdom is hidden in the lowliest trust.

Consider what *distrust* means. Distrust means that in a universe in which every atom is ordered by determined laws, and harmony secured among a myriad worlds, we mortals, ignorant although we are, venture to imagine that our lives are uncared for by the Power sustaining all things—because *we* cannot comprehend all His ways. Distrust means that we question whether the Giver of all we have and all we are—knows as well as we do what ought to be granted and what withheld from His creatures. Distrust means that we doubt whether the Father of Jesus Christ and of all the noble and lovely souls who have ever dwelt upon earth—is good enough and loving enough for us to commit our destiny to His guidance with free and fearless hearts.

Trust means that we are so profoundly conscious of the marvellous majesty and glory of creation—so grateful for the gift of life with all its possibilities of

love and thought and duty, so mastered by reverence for the great Spirit, the source of all life, made manifest in the lives of the great and good among men, that we can fear no evil. This trust in God indeed is but equivalent to the trust man reposes in man. In a battle, a general gives his orders; neither officers nor men pause to discuss their meaning; strict and prompt obedience gives the only hope of victory. In sickness, a doctor prescribes a daring remedy, and it is administered because his skill is trusted. I remember taking a prescription to a chemist when one of my children was very ill. 'This is most unusual,' was the chemist's comment, and he seemed to hesitate about placing the medicine in my hands—but he recognised the signature of a famous physician —it was enough and he trusted me with the dangerous compound. The trust we have in each other I know not how we dare refuse to the Lord of all. Around us is a Power we cannot resist; Wisdom which concentrates in a weed or insect, marvels which the study of a lifetime cannot fathom; Righteousness casting us down in woe or uplifting us to a Heaven of peace as it is defied or respected; Tenderness to which we owe blessings so dear and sweet that it is

worth living to have enjoyed them whatever the future may bring forth.

What is *distrust* but the presumptuousness of ignorance? What is *trust* but the humble and reverent confession of our infinite inferiority to the Supreme Being without whom nothing has been made that is made?

If we remember our God with gratitude as the giver of our joys, we shall find ourselves nearer to Him in our sorrows.

A certain elderly lady is reported to have observed when something very pleasant had happened to her, 'Most people would say Providence, but for my part I only say "Providence" when things do not go right.' This trick of only saying 'Providence' as a kind of comforting thought when misfortunes come, and forgetting Providence when happiness is ours, is no uncommon one; and a grave injustice is thus done to our Creator by associating Him with our woes more emphatically than with our joys, and the bright cheerfulness of a true religious faith is hidden under dark and melancholy shadows. Those whose hearts are

fullest of thankfulness for all the rich gifts of God are those who, when those gifts are taken away, can say with the most trustful resignation, 'Thy will be done.' They have known so much of their Lord's goodness that they cannot be guilty of the ingratitude of doubting it, when *His* hand presents to their lips a cup of bitterness.

Our baffled wishes may be, like our 'dead selves,'
'stepping-stones to higher things.'

Nothing can happen to us from which we may not win some grace of character. Does a storm break over us? We can learn to be calm in the midst of its fierceness. All the resources of our being are challenged into activity by its violence. An American captain in the midst of a furious gale once said, 'Well! there's always something sublime about a big deal like this, and it kind of raises a man in his own liking.'

Does the storm master us and shipwreck our hopes? It may leave us still with a fearless and unconquered soul. Prevented by 'destiny,' or 'fate,' as we may in our ignorance name the Power that

sometimes seems to act against us in the world and to strike our personal desires down to the ground with apparently ruthless disregard, from journeying along the road which we have chosen for ourselves—when the end and aim of our lives is to press onward to our 'high calling'—(but only *then*) we shall find some other path leading to the very Kingdom of Heaven, if we waste no energy in grumbling because our will is not done, and are content to follow the leading of a Wisdom greater than our own.

Our afflictions when patiently, trustfully, and lovingly borne will bring to us blessings of their own.

Alpine travellers know how glorious are the hues of the flowers upon snow-clad heights. Not the gayest parterre of our gardens can show blossoms so richly coloured as those that are found near the snow on lofty mountains. Even the familiar friends of our fields have a supreme glory *there* added to them. The common forget-me-not is more delicately and at the same time more gorgeously blue when it grows on the edge of a snow-field thousands of feet above the sea than when it dwells by the streams in English

meadows. Even so joys greater than those known in our days of prosperity may come to us in cold seasons of great tribulation. Illness may bring a supreme revelation of the depth of the love our friends feel for us. Our disappointments may awaken sympathies more delightful than any congratulations on happy success can be. Our loss of earthly treasures may be our gain of an inward peace that passes understanding.

Many of the bleak and desolate paths, along which, by the hard circumstances of our lives we are compelled to travel, lead to green pastures and still waters.

As we look back upon our past days we may discern many signs that they have been guided by a wisdom greater than our own. Many of the calls which have been made upon our resources and energies, against which we have murmured, but have not been able to thrust aside, have helped to make us stronger and better men.

If we had had our own way, we should have avoided many troublesome tasks—but those tasks, when well discharged, have brought rich spiritual

blessings in their train. The business affairs that have perplexed us, if their lessons have been learnt, have taught us how to live more wisely. Claims which we at first resisted, and to which we would not yield, have, when acknowledged, been translated into blessings.

Bitter disappointments, when not permitted to cast us down into despair, have rebuked our shortcomings, and delivered us from our pride, and made us understand more fully what that Kingdom of God is that may be within the souls of all who can patiently endure all things for its sake.

The failures of the brave and bold in heart are better than the successes of the cowardly and time-serving.

I was once told by a distinguished naval officer who had command of a gunboat in the Baltic, during the Russian war, that the admiral of the fleet summoned him and other young men to his flagship and addressed them to the following effect:—'Now, young men, you will be wanting to run your boats close to those fortifications and get into danger and distinguish yourselves; if you do, I will cashier every one of

you.' Whether or not a naval necessity existed for so prudential a warning, it is not for me to decide; but in our voyage among the rocks and shoals and opposing batteries of temptations established in the narrow seas of our earthly careers, daring Christian courage is an element of character which is essential for the accomplishment of any high purposes. Heroic imprudences will often prove stepping-stones to mighty achievements. The soul, 'by one enthusiast feeling unredeemed' may be betrayed into no mistakes, but it will win no glorious victories.

By treasuring in our hearts the happiness of to-day, to-morrow's cares will be lightened.

The sun shines to-day;—that to-morrow, dark and stormy clouds may hide its radiance is no reason for not rejoicing in its present glory; nay, *it is a reason for rejoicing* in order that its light may be treasured in our hearts for any time of need. Our coals are imprisoned sunlight; and we can warm ourselves in our cold winters by our firesides because the heat of tropical summers of ages past is retained in the 'black diamonds' of our mines. In our hearts we may

preserve to-day's sunlight and be made by it 'of good cheer' in sadder days to come.

Peace amid cares and troubles will be found if we look upon this earth as a HOME *in which our Heavenly Father has placed us for the season of our childhood.*

How sweet and grateful it is to gather round the hearth on a stormy night, when darkness seems a tangible thing, resting heavily upon the ground and pressing like a force that can never pass away; and when the wind sighs and sweeps by, and, after sighing, shrieks like the voice of a world in agony, and wicked deeds seem more possible because of the weird wildness of its rushing tones. We feel the fire warmer and cosier because of the tempest driving the rain against the windows, and the laughter of our children rings more merrily in our ears because of the contrast with the raging voice of stormy desolation.

When we look upon this world as a *home* in which our Creator has placed us to pass our childhood, a kindred joy will be ours. As the wild blasts of strange mysteries sweep round, the fire of hope will burn the more brightly. In the midst of our cares

and anxieties we shall be as children gathering around the fire on a dreary night. Knowing our Maker's world our home, we shall fear no evil, for where home is, there the heart is satisfied and untroubled.

Our departed friends may dwell within our hearts as daily companions.

Our affection for our departed friends is best shown, as their spirits dwell with us as living presences, and as we day by day, in our going out and our coming in, feel that they are with us still as our welcome comrades. What would they wish us to do? What would they think concerning the events that are happening in the daily course of our lives? What would they enjoy? As we ask such questions as these, they, although to the eye invisible, and by the ear unheard, will take up their abode with us. As we perchance visit some scene of loveliness, as we gather some fair flower, as we read some great book, and think how they would have been gladdened by the same things that are beautiful, dear, and precious to us; nay, even as we are assured by some happy social incident, to imagine how they would have smiled and

laughed—such things as these are evidences of a deeper, fuller, purer love than the concentration of all our meditations upon their graves.

We should never despair of being able to please God.

The feeling that we can do very little worth doing for God or man not unseldom makes us do less than we *can* do, and prevents us from exerting all the moral energy which is latent within us. Yet the humblest deeds lovingly done can never be unwelcome to a loving heart. *More than children can do*, no Heavenly Father, any more than an earthly father can demand.

My little child sometimes brings me wild flowers from the field, and insists that her handful of dandelions, daisies, and meadow-sweet shall be put into the vase side by side with the moss rose and the garden fuchsia; they are *her* gift which she offers with proud hand and proud heart, and there in the place of honour they must be, and the garden flowers have no such loveliness and perfume, because they are laden with no such love. Even so, between man and God, these poor wild flowers we bring from earth may yet hope for a place among the amaranths gathered by the saints in paradise, if offered with childlike faith and joy.

ALTHOUGH OUR YEARS ARE NUMBERED AND WE KNOW NOT WHEN THEIR END MAY COME, WHILE WE ARE YET ALIVE, WE OUGHT NOT TO TREAT THIS EARTH AS THOUGH IT WERE THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH.

It is neither healthful nor right always to be thinking about death.

Some truly religious men teach that death should be as seldom as possible out of our thoughts. The issues of eternity, they plead, are so momentous and dread, that all earthly interests sink into insignificance before them, and must, so far as it lies within our power be discarded. We are obliged, they admit, to attend to them to a certain extent; but, they urge that the more we treat them as less than nothing and vanity, and restrict the meditations of our heart to what will happen after death, the wiser shall we be.

I cannot sympathise with this doctrine. It is not sound even for those who mourn the gravest losses. All of us have rich and abundantly full opportunities of blessing others; the circle of our families and friends, the poor and desolate who are at our very doors, can always be made happier. Selfishness is no anodyne for grief; unselfishness brings with it the most blessed of consolations. Let any who mourn think of others; let them treat with generous kindliness the men, women, and children round about them, and their sorrow will be glorified. The 'doing good,'

the caring for another's welfare, the provision of some gracious blessing for those who would otherwise be unblest, will bring them into closer and tenderer communion with the Everlasting Love, the source of all Love; and as they are drawn nearer to His love, His peace will fall upon them.

True is it that in life we are in the midst of death—but it is equally true that in the midst of death we are in life.

That God helps us on earth is manifest evidence that *here* is the work He would have us do, and that *here* we ought gratefully to receive whatever blessings it may please Him to bestow.

I do not therefore say, either to myself or others, 'Because at a moment's notice you may die, give up every mortal pleasure;' but rather dare I say, 'Gather roses while you may; the flower indeed must fade, yet, surely, our Creator intends that we should enjoy it while it blooms, or He would not have caused it to unfold its beauty.'

I do not say, 'Because at a moment's notice you may die, take slight interest in the busy world's affairs;'

but, 'This is God's world; live in it as His children; strive to do His will on earth as it is done in Heaven.'

I do not say, 'Because at a moment's notice you may die, think as little as you can of anything save the grave and the eternal kingdom beyond its portals;' but, 'Remember what God is requiring of you *now*, ere the flesh knows corruption; *now*, while the sun is shining in your sky and the fields of earth are yielding their harvests to industrious toilers.'

One of the clearest messages that come to us from the graves of those we love is THIS—*be more faithful to your living friends.*

When we entertain a friend, certain to leave us on the morrow for a long, far-away journey, how anxious we are to make him feel the full warmth of our affection. No sign by which we can show our love, however slight and trifling, is willingly forgotten. When we remember that, although it has become a familiar custom, an ordinary matter of course, to be in each other's company, we may yet be parted to-morrow, are we not warned that there ought to be more diligence of love, more thoughtfulness of heart in our daily

intercourse? I suppose no one has ever lost a dear friend without sorrowing that while there was opportunity he did not sufficiently make known all he felt. Memory brings sadly back a hundred occasions on which more might have been done to brighten and gladden the days of the departed one. While we yet remain alive, God gives us the chance of lessening for the future the burden of such regrets by our better and tenderer faithfulness to those around us. No message from the grave comes to us with clearer distinctness than this.

As we approach the grave, if we are still and quiet, we shall hear a voice within us saying 'fear no evil.'

I have known enough of mortal weakness to understand what is meant by the ebbing tide of life. At one time in my personal history it seemed as though my vigour were quickly and quietly passing away like the moon-drawn waters from the shore—ebbing back to the great vast unknown Deep beyond. Two thoughts, or rather feelings then prominently asserted themselves.

(1) I became exceptionally impressed with the *out-*

wardness of all that the world can give or take away, of all that decay or corruption can touch. This bodily frame, human verdicts of praise or blame, wealth and rank, all the possessions upon which in mortal communities such a high value is placed, seemed to have very little connection with real life. In the midst of physical weakness, there came a strange consciousness of life, life in itself and by itself, life which was love and trust and hope, life which was independent of the shifting changes of external circumstances. We may doubt whether we have 'souls' over which the grave can have no power, we may be inclined to dismiss things spiritual as fancies, dreams, vague imaginings, when we are eagerly and thoroughly absorbed in the world's busy activities, but when those activities are laid aside through the strong compulsion of the frailty of the flesh, *then* 'what is of the Spirit' stands out in prominence as reliable substance, and what is not of the spirit resolves itself into transitory shadow. This at least has been my experience.

(2) A certain spirit of fearlessness also especially came to me. There seemed nothing in the earth beneath or in heaven above to be afraid of. I tried to analyse this feeling and to understand, if I could, the

grounds upon which it was based. It is difficult to put the result into words, and the best I can use will be vague, but I found myself strangely conscious of being part of the universal framework of things—of belonging to the 'vast all' of creation; and with this consciousness came the conviction that a living soul can no more be doomed to an evil destiny than this orbed globe—with the gloriously radiant Mediterranean sea I could watch from my sick bed by day, and the lustrous stars that I had the shutters opened to permit me to gaze upon by night—can be seized by demon-powers of Confusion and Mischief and be reduced to a hopeless and miserable Chaos.

When we are near death, we learn the value of life.

I have been sick nigh unto death and have happily watched the turn of the tide—the flowing back of the replenished waters of life, their creeping, as it were, over the sands, and refilling each nook and cranny among the rocks. With this renewed fulness of earthly life has come the conviction *not* of its vanity but of its high privileges and its inestimable worth. I do not come back to you and say 'this emphatic

warning that at any moment this earth may vanish from our gaze teaches us that it will be wise to wean our hearts from its interests, to do all we can to weaken the ties that bind us to its affairs, and to be on our guard against loving too dearly our comrades and friends lest we should be rebelliously unwilling to leave them when the inevitable parting comes.'

On the contrary, my message is—'Since we know not the hour at which we may be called away, let us make the happiest, as well as the best, use of the days that remain; let us enjoy the more thoroughly the sunshine and the flowers, and whatsoever things of beauty are around us, with grateful souls, leaving it to our Heavenly Father to provide for the future as He has done for the past; let us the more strenuously address ourselves to our appointed tasks, while the opportunity is ours, in full confidence that the best way to prepare ourselves for the work of any other world is to do well our work in this; let us be lavish spenders of our love, and be made the more eager to serve our fellow-men to-day by every warning that we may be marched away from them to-morrow.'

THE HOPE OF IMMORTALITY IS NOT SUGGESTED AND SUSTAINED MERELY BY OUR LOVE OF LIFE, BUT IS SUPPORTED BY FACTS CONNECTED WITH—

(1) The differences *in kind* between the life of the spirit and the life of the flesh.

(2) The incompleteness of any life which can be led on earth, when measured by the possibilities of man's spiritual growth.

(3) The revelation made in the lives of all good men of spiritual powers grander and mightier than any manifested in the physical universe.

(4) The actual passing 'from glory to glory' which takes place as a matter of fact both throughout creation, so far as it comes within our knowledge, and in the development of the successive epochs in our lives, as they succeed each other from our childhood to our old age.

That which is 'of the spirit' differs in nature from that which is of the flesh;—that which is 'of the flesh' therefore may perish and that which is 'of the spirit' live.

Whatever difficulty there may be in precisely defining what is termed 'matter' and what is termed 'spirit,' the distinctions between the phenomena which form the subjects of scientific study, and the moral responsibilities with which religion is concerned remain unobliterated. That certain physical antecedents and concomitants are connected with the act of thinking and the exercise of the will, does not prove that we have no life beyond that of our bodily organisation; it only proves *present association* and furnishes no ground of objection to the claim of religion that this association is only temporary. The life indeed which is capable of thought and moved by passion differs *in kind* from the energies of the external world. A moral struggle against a passion is one thing, a chemical combination another. Honourable integrity of character is not the same thing as the faithfulness of the needle to the pole. The death of a martyr has a grandeur not possessed by an

experiment in a laboratory. With respect *to things that differ in kind*, there may be temporary association, but one of them may perish and the other remain untouched; the body therefore may decay and the soul live. Physical death does not prove a negative with respect to immortality.

The incompleteness of the noblest life that can be led on earth confirms our faith that there is a Life within our minds and hearts and souls over which the grave can have no power.

The nature God has given us *cannot* grow *here*, even in threescore years and ten, to the full stature of its possible glory. A tree achieves its perfectness. It stands fairly at the height which its nature permits it to attain; and the birds of the air sing in the branches thereof, melodies as sweet as can be poured from the throats of birds. Our bodies accomplish all that muscles and nerves can do; each organ fulfils its function and can be pronounced healthfully perfect after its kind. But *within* are thoughts that wander through eternity. Prayers arise that earthly circumstances can never answer. Aspirations ascend to an

unrealised Ideal and pass in glory beyond the boundaries of the grave. No good man is content with his own goodness. Others may praise him as generous, pure, and true; but praise only makes the good man more conscious that he might be better than he is. Our characters keep no nobleness, unless we strive to become nobler. Let moral effort be abandoned; let anyone say to himself, 'I am good enough; I will not strive to become holier than I am;' he will deliver to decay such poor virtues as he may now possess.

Even when the activity of memory fails, and the weight of years prevents the discharge of many accustomed tasks, the *noblest aspects of human character* can and do grow in strength and loveliness. Love becomes more loving, and generosity more generous, and the moral interests of Life more supreme as the years of a faithful Christian increase. The *spiritual growth* of a noble Old Age dwarfs into nothingness its physical decay.

Let us live as nobly as we may, this world does not and cannot exhaust the capacities of the nature we possess.

Let us study to the utmost, amass all the know-

ledge within our grasp, carry onward our researches with extremest diligence, it is impossible to satisfy the craving of the mind for truth; the more we understand, the intenser becomes the desire to receive more light.

Let us live as gently and generously as we can; let there be the constant contrivance of some larger and larger sign of gracious charity; it will be impossible to satisfy the loving heart; nay, the more loving the heart, the less content it is with aught it can do to manifest its love.

No man can wear out his power of doing his duty. The discharge of one task strengthens conscience to make a demand still more severe. Should we do our duty all our lives, we should not diminish our capacity for obeying the will of God. On the contrary, I have noticed that conscientiousness becomes more keen and delicate among good men as they near their graves.

Our last days will not be as those of the gnarled and withered trees of the forest which have completed the fulness of their possible growth. The promise hidden in the soul of an old man is as vast as that within the baby in its mother's arms.

'The child is father of the man,' and the man is the father of the immortal child of God.

Unless all things in heaven and earth are mockeries —the harmonies of creation but wild dreams and chaos the inevitable end of all—what *can* this mean but that we are 'heirs of all the ages' with a destiny commensurate in grandeur to the strength of the faculties and the depth of the feelings bestowed upon us?

It is incredible that time should be lavished upon the creation of the world and denied for the growth of the soul.

In the history of creation, *time* has been regarded as of no consequence at all. It has taken millions of years to fashion our seas and continents. Taking the mere surface of our globe, tens of thousands of years have been employed in cutting the course of a river, and in heaping up a mere ridge of sand and clay. But by virtue of his mental powers, his affections, and his conscience, a man is greater than a world. Since ages have been spent upon the evolution of what is less than man, there is every rational ground for believing that for the full growth of man himself, time will never fail.

The life of every faithful servant of Christ brings immortality to light.

It *is* a strange and awful thing to die. But from a good man's life streams the richest and fullest light which can be thrown upon the darkness of the grave.

When a brave man, afflicted to the point of martyrdom by a torturing disease, passes in quiet, uncomplaining and truthful serenity, undaunted and unconquered, through the valley of the shadow, he reveals the existence of powers, living powers, within the soul, mightier and more enduring than any that sustain the healthful strength of our raiment of flesh and blood. As we study the record of a good man's days, we cannot but see as plainly as the sun shining at mid-day, that all things which are most beautiful and glorious in the heavens above and the earth beneath, the countless stars in their courses, the elements in their ordered activities—are but as shadows compared with the beauty and glory of a Christian life. Surely we are justified in concluding that the life which is sublimer than any physical cause of bodily decay can never be subdued by a power inferior to itself.

The assurance of immortality is hidden in the righteousness and love of a good man's life.

The dying strengthen the living by their fearlessness.

All who have been by the bedsides of the dying know how often trust in God deepens as the grave is approached. When the shadow of death rests upon the body, it does not necessarily darken the mind and heart. An eminent physician once said that it was very rare to find any one *who was actually dying*, afraid of death. Before the hour of death comes there may be anxiety, but *that hour itself* is as a rule, more awful to the spectator than to the sufferer. Many and many *good* men and women, especially, calmly pass away, just as tired children fall quietly to sleep, assured without a doubt that they will awake to life and light again. I know not where we can search for religious truth with greater certainty that it may be found, than in the experiences of the most loving and dutiful of our race. The puposes of the Creator are surely most brightly manifested in his noblest works. The best men must be the clearest revealers of His will. That divine confidence in the Life Eternal which renders the change of death—a change to us who are in health terrible in its surroundings and awful to contemplate—a matter of comparatively slender account to those about to pass through it, may justly increase our confidence

that the soul can know no corruption. There can be no moral justification for a faith less strong than the faith of those consciously entering upon the Valley of the Shadow. If the dying fear no evil, and fall asleep like tired children, what can we, the living, cry but this: 'O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?'

All earthly changes are prophecies of a nobler future.

The stars of midnight are full of golden prophecy of a Heaven to come. They never rest in their courses or turn back upon their ancient ways. In our own world, each one of that series of shifting epochs alike of physical scenery and forms of animal life the past presents, contained the elements of its own destruction, for the sake of giving birth to a being capable of thought, and love, and duty, and adoration; and providing for him a fitting dwelling-place.

No creature in the past has been what man is to-day. And this earth's history has not reached its last chapter. A new world is being created by the action of the same forces as those by which our continents and seas were fashioned; while age after age man is conquering evil and establishing righteousness. Each

stage in our own brief pilgrimage is a prophecy. Childhood is rich in prophecies of youth's coming strength and active-mindedness and enthusiasm; youth in prophecies of what manhood will be; and manhood, in prophecies which the wisest and noblest old age never can fulfil. The larger the knowledge that is gained, the more is the mind unsatisfied, until it wins a height beyond. The fonder the heart's love, the more intense is its yearning to prove its faithfulness more tenderly. The stricter the obedience of the disciplined will, the more eagerly do we press forward to the mark of a higher calling.

Since the stars are full of golden prophecy; and the earth has not closed the record of its glory; and each epoch of the past has been succeeded by a nobler; and the promise of childhood is utterly incapable of fulfilment in time, whether ten years, or threescore and ten be granted; and the heart can never be so comforted with any blessing as to forget its insatiable craving to dwell with those called to the silent land;—there is no future destiny for man too sublime to be rationally hoped for, and the 'dreamers of dreams' are the wise men of the world.

WHATEVER THE FUTURE MAY BRING FORTH, THE BEST MEN ARE THOSE WHO HAVE THE LEAST REASON TO FEAR ANY EVIL AND THE MOST RATIONAL GROUNDS FOR HUMBLY TRUSTING THAT THEY WILL RECEIVE WHATEVER BLESSINGS IT MAY PROVE POSSIBLE FOR HUMAN BEINGS TO ENJOY AFTER THEY HAVE PASSED THROUGH THE PORTALS OF THE GRAVE.

No good man need ever fear that his soul can be 'lost.'

Our souls can be stained by our own acts and deeds alone. They cannot be injured by any power in the heavens above or the earth beneath or any place under the earth, save by the power of our own passions. We cannot be robbed of our God as our pockets might be picked of our money. Our joy in righteousness, our love of the sanctity of good men, our reverence for Christ—cannot be taken from us by all the blended powers of earth and heaven. A noble soul thrust into the flames of any conceivable hell cannot become a 'LOST soul' so long as it retains its holiness unconquered and uncorrupted.

The known tendency of all creation is towards perfection; and those who most faithfully obey the divine laws on earth are therefore most justified in cherishing the sublimest hopes concerning any world to come.

Of all observers of facts, Darwin was among the greatest. His patience was unbounded; his accuracy beyond challenge. Details that have escaped notice

since the beginning of the world, were noted and carefully recorded by him. Just as without egotistic pride Burns could sign himself 'Robert Burns, poet,' so Darwin could truly write of himself, 'My industry has been as great as it could have been, in the observation and collection of facts.' All that is painful and terrible in the struggle for life, he faced and examined with absolute frankness. 'The conclusion of the whole matter' to which this great observer of Nature—who used the strictest methods of scientific research—came, is wonderfully encouraging for all who are striving to do their best during their earthly lives. He tells us that 'from the war of nature, from famine and death, the most exalted object of which we are capable of conceiving, namely, the production of the higher animals, directly follows;' that the laws by which the production and extinction of the past and present inhabitants of the world have been effected, work 'solely by and for the good of each being;' and that therefore '*all corporeal and mental endowments will tend to progress towards perfection.*'

Our faith as to what may be expected to happen to ourselves and our race in the future may be rationally determined by what has happened in the

past and is happening in the present. Whatever may come to pass, we are therefore justified in believing, will be a 'progress towards perfection,' unless the whole tendency of creation is to be reversed. It follows that the Psalmist's confidence that 'the Lord will perfect that which concerneth me' is well based on known facts; and that the statement of Christ, 'Ye shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect,' does not transcend the boundaries of possibility.

It also follows that the more perfectly we live on earth, the more assured may we be of the glory of our destiny in any world to come.

According to Christ's teachings there is room enough in Heaven for all God's children.

How soul-cheering are those words of Christ's—'in my Father's house are many mansions.' Notice well the word *mansions*, large and stately dwelling-places, which many eyes can see, which have many entrances, and within each of which is the prodigal hospitality of a Father's love. What blessed peace for doubting, trembling souls, groping in the darkness and hardly daring to look up lest their transgressions should be hopelessly condemned! God's Heaven is

not to be inhabited merely by an exclusive few. It will be large enough to receive men of all classes, sects and nations! 'In my Father's house are many mansions,'—how comforting the thought for those of us who have no lordly, proud ambitions, and who are more than content to do our duties as unobtrusively as we may; who have no genius for believing human creeds, and on the most sacred themes employ the fewest words; and who cannot uplift ourselves to the region of ecstatic visions. In the 'many mansions' there may be found room even for us. Let the great saints sit upon their thrones, and be crowned with glory. If sectarian people wish a heaven for themselves, let them have a heaven where they may. Let those who will, dream of a city in Paradise with jewelled gates and pavements of gold as their own proud dwelling-place. I, for one, humbly trust that within the 'many mansions' some quiet chambers will not be far to seek where loving hearts may feel at home and be permitted to rejoice in the Heavenly light and adore the wondrous grace of Him whose mercy is over all His works.

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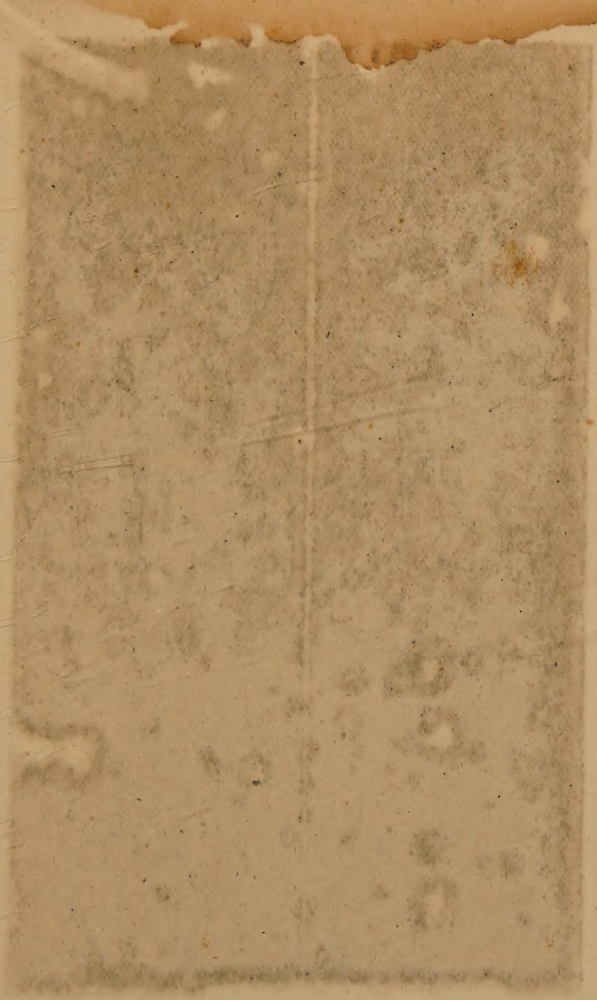

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